

# GANDHI MARG

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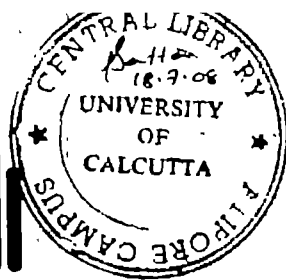
Special Issue

on

SATYAGRAHA

Gandhi Peace Foundation  
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# GANDHI MARG



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*Quarterly Journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation*



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# Introduction

*John Moolakkattu*

GANDHI'S REVOLUTIONARY TECHNIQUES to address social and political conflict have drawn considerable attention from the international community since the beginning of his career as a political activist. Referred to as satyagraha, these principles have been described as Gandhi's distinctive contribution to the field of conflict transformation. They rely on techniques of active non-violent intervention drawing on the inner strength of individuals. The first dose of powerlessness, and humiliation, was experienced by Gandhi at the office of the local British Political Agent soon after he returned to India in 1891 with a law degree from England. The second, much harsher, came from two railway officials and a policeman who threw him out of an all-white, first class train compartment at Maritzburg station in Natal, South Africa. These two incidents shook Gandhi, and his mind was engrossed in the task of evolving a humane method of resistance that left the victim, the aggressor and the onlookers better off. He also evolved a method of fighting characterized by deployment of opposite means and qualities rather than relying on the same methods of the 'adversary'.

Since all human beings were looked upon by Gandhi within a relational framework, it was necessary that conflicts are waged in a manner and language that reflected and reinforced this connectedness rather than creating a rupture in it. Conflicts, according to this view, are expected to take the shape of truth contestations in which the 'adversaries' are called upon to engage in a joint search for truth. A satyagrahi, even as he holds fast to truth, can be made to realise his own errors. Differences emerge primarily at the cognitive level, and

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it is at this level that we need to strike and not at the physical. Ravindra Varma says that since the objective of satyagraha is "to bring about a transformation of the mind, every single act and the mental attitude behind every act, should be such as helps to bring about transformation, not to intensify intransigence, or unwillingness to listen to what one wants to urge for consideration. Nothing should be done, therefore, to insult or humiliate the 'adversary'".<sup>1</sup> Even if one does not win the 'adversary' to one's side, the prospects of winning him over at a later stage should be explored. Gandhi himself had admitted that it is this attitude that allowed him to continue to trust his so-called 'adversaries' even when they let him down several times. The alternative to satyagraha was violence which is based on a notion of absolute truth possessed by its perpetrators and the arrogance stemming from it. Satyagraha offered an opportunity to the oppressors to address the issue in a manner that did not lead to outcomes which were publicly seen as constituting a loss of face.

Through satyagraha many have come to believe that they have the "strength to exert a counter- power against those in authority". It provides a means through which "the personal is made political".<sup>2</sup> For Gandhi how something should be resisted, that is the means used is also vitally important because the means set the stage for the ends. As Gandhi often said, "the means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree," meaning the types of means utilized have a direct impact on the kinds of results that are produced. Gandhian resistance is based on his overarching philosophical commitment to nonviolence and is based on a principle of not doing harm. Gandhi, at one point, described satyagraha as an "an extension of the domestic law on the political field".<sup>3</sup> This means that the same moral laws govern all spheres of human activity including politics.

Since satyagraha is a search for truth, it cannot be undertaken for an unjust cause or for personal gain. It demands absolute non-violence—no vilification of the opponent or hostility to persons. Only a generally law-abiding person can undertake it. It presupposes the capacity and willingness to suffer and sacrifice. Discipline is obligatory and nothing like mass satyagraha is possible. It also demands utmost humility on the part of the satyagrahi.<sup>4</sup>

Not many people find the spiritual elements of Gandhian satyagraha easily amenable to practice. King interpreted Gandhi to mean a concept of Love Force and translated the Gandhian principle of *tapas* (suffering) into the Myth of the Cross in his own Christian context. But he did not resort to personal practices such as celibacy and fasting. Ideas such as the 'opponent should be trusted', 'his weak moments should not be exploited', and 'doors should be kept open

for talks at all stages of the conflict' and so on may sound too unrealistic for many. However, Gandhi had deeper goals than addressing the immediate issues surrounding the conflict. Satyagraha makes the very process of conflict emergence, progression and final resolution an integrated transformational process.

The extent to which the satyagrahi disciplines himself and avoids the pleasures of possession impacts on his autonomy and strength. There is the usual charge that Gandhi encouraged a form of masochism. But willingness to undertake self-suffering should be seen in terms of its spiritual connotations as well as for generating certain specific processes in the dynamics of satyagraha. But many enthusiasts of Gandhian nonviolence tend to be influenced by the strategic aspects alone, which are easily amenable to rational choice theories and which can be practised by ordinary people. Gene Sharp is the main exponent of this perspective. There are some scholars like Johan Galtung who argue for a position I understand to be somewhere between the strategic and principled approaches, which recognizes the importance of both principles and cost-benefit considerations in sustainable nonviolent action.<sup>5</sup>

I must say a word about the connections between satyagraha and constructive programme. Most of the western accounts gloss over this aspect as an unnecessary element. But activism in any field can be sustained only if we also involve in activities which are constructive, which promote positive attitudes in the minds of people. Constructive activities constitute a retreat period of reflection before the next action begins. It also enables the participants to develop positive attitudes and also extend messages emerging from them to the 'adversaries'. Towards the end of his life he insisted more on constructive programme and compared acts of civil disobedience without constructive work as like "a paralysed hand attempting to lift a spoon".<sup>6</sup>

Weber considers the literature on conflict resolution theory that emerged outside knowledge of satyagraha as complementary to the principles and goals of satyagraha.<sup>7</sup> Satyagraha also is an "educational process that would not only create among the satyagrahis an acute awareness of injustice and exploitation, but also restore their dignity and self-respect and spur them to action. In this respect, satyagraha shares a common goal with concepts like conscientisation and pacific socialization".<sup>8</sup>

The satyagraha dynamics has been compared to the discourse on deliberative democracy propounded by Jurgen Habermas by Rudolf and Rudolf. They say that unlike the exclusive focus on the power of reason in Habermasian deliberation, Gandhi would argue that 'the

heart must work together with the mind if deliberative processes are to produce shared truth."<sup>9</sup> For Gandhi, "reason has to be strengthened by suffering; and suffering opens the eyes of understanding".<sup>10</sup>

This spécial issue of Gandhi Marg devoted to satyagraha contains nine articles written by scholars and scholar-practitioners. Three of these papers emerged from an international seminar held in October 2007 at Jawaharlal Nehru University with the collaboration of Gandhi Peace Foundation to commemorate the centenary of Gandhian satyagraha.

The first article by A.V. Joseph looks at how Gandhian satyagraha had taken on board some of the agenda which we now associate with new social movements although historically the movement was located at an earlier period. He describes satyagraha as a peace movement in that it had attempted to tackle both negative, positive peace and inner peace with illustrative cases. The author also laments the inadequate attention being paid to understanding Gandhi's Satyagraha campaigns by sociologists and their failure to locate their deeper meanings.

In his article entitled "Challenging Grand Narratives and the Fatalism They Sponsor" Ronald J. Terchek tells us that Gandhi's major objections to grand narratives arise from their proclivity to deny the validity of other claims to knowledge and the truth and to universalize their applications for everyone under its sway. Gandhi holds that apparently weak and powerless individuals are able to take charge of their own lives. Fatalism is antithetical to satyagraha. It is not only about overcoming fear but also about challenging the entrenched power of the day as well as the orthodoxy of the time.

Sarmistha Pattanaik looks at the relevance of satyagraha in contemporary environmental movements in India. She explores the Gandhian values and principles of non-violence in relation to nature. The paper traces elements of Gandhian satyagraha in notable contemporary environmental movements in India such as Chipko, NBA (Narmada Bachao Andolan) and CBA (Chilika Bachao Andolan). She also traces the evolution of alternative perspectives on development in the discourse surrounding these movements.

The next article by Paul E. Wehr shows how Gandhi was a master conflict strategist and tactician. In satyagraha campaigns, his commitment to nonviolence and the goal of persuading his adversaries required control of the conflict generated. Conflict has dynamic tendencies toward unbridled escalation that Gandhi used restraints to control. One of these was a stepwise approach where spiralling escalation was precluded with built-in interruptions in the campaign for reconsideration of goals and conditions, manual labour, and

spiritual renewal. That measured approach to conflict allowed Gandhi to guide his movement through decades of social tension with minimal harm to his opponents. These ideas build on and reinforce his earlier description of Gandhian satyagraha as a form of self-limiting conflict.

Rahul Ramagundam makes an assessment of the Bhoodan movement based on a field study at Gaya in Bihar. The essay makes a Gandhian critique of the movement and argues that the movement though Gandhian in origin had lost its essence at a later stage. The essay combines a study of documentation of the movement at the Gaya Bhoodan office supported by filed visits.

According to Sarojini Henry, Gandhi was a poet of life in his choice of symbols, such as, the loin-cloth, the silent Mondays, the famous fasts and the spinning wheel- symbols that made sense to his largely illiterate followers. It paved the way for a counter culture, one that held high dignity. This is particularly true of the spinning wheel. She sees similarities between Gandhi's approach and the "I-Thou" model of Martin Buber who tried to break with the 'I-It' model of lack of connectedness between the self and the other. Satyagraha creates a dialogue type situation unlike in violence where there is a monologue, according to her.

Jørgen Johansen and Brian Martin, in their article entitled "Sending the Protest message" speaks about the many issues that non-violent activists face while engaging in action. The context of actions, the choices ahead, potential audiences of actions, solidarity among activists, personal commitment, strategies when attacked and forms of resistance are all discussed in the article. The article has many useful suggestions for activists and it also poses throws up several research questions.

N. Benjamin's article entitled "Corporate Land Acquisition, Peasant Resistance and Satyagraha in Mulshi Peta (Poona District)" describes how peasants protested non-violently against the acquisition of land for industrial purposes as early as 1921 and how Gandhi had supported it on grounds of peasant self-determination. It also throws indirect light on how Gandhi would have responded to issues like Nandigram. Gandhi gave moral support to satyagraha in Mulshi Peta and became actively involved in it when the satyagrahis, who were flogged, undertook hunger strike in the jail. At the end, he dissociated himself from the satyagraha as it drifted towards violence. The author says that the satyagraha brought the peasants to the fold of freedom struggle and removed the fear of imprisonment from their minds.

M.P.Mathai examines fasting as a method of satyagraha. The Gandhian approach to fasting was an act of faith aimed at reaching communion with God and reducing oneself to a cipher at the service

of God rather than being directed against any adversary. This would awaken the conscience of all closely known to the person undertaking the fast. Gandhi considered it as the ultimate weapon, to be used very carefully as a last resort. Unlike the other methods Gandhi imposed stricter rules for anyone deciding to undertake fasting to prevent its distortion or amateurish deployment, according to the author.

In the final essay Geeta Mehta enunciates the principles of satyagraha taking into account the contributions of Vinoba.

The articles contained in this issue do not claim to constitute a comprehensive collection on the theory and practice of satyagraha. They however provide us analytical, historic and practical insights on many aspects of satyagraha, which can contribute to the "science of satyagraha", a "science in the making".

### Notes and References

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# Conceptual and Theoretical Issues in Satyagraha as Peace Movement

*A.V. Joseph*

**S**OCIOLOGISTS HAVE SO far not paid enough attention to Gandhi's contributions to sociology. Little systematic work has been carried out on the process, phases and forms of social and peace movements initiated by him. In the discourses on peace movement, lot of literature is available in European and American sociology. Third world sociology produced only meagre literature on peace movements. It is in this context, attention has been drawn to satyagraha movement developed and practiced by Gandhi. Satyagraha is viewed as a peace movement capable of providing peace at different levels. In this paper an effort is made to understand the concept and dimensions of peace, concept and theory of satyagraha, sociology of satyagraha as social movement, and sociology of satyagraha as peace movement. The paper discusses and analyses four major satyagrahas under the leadership and guidance of Gandhi that incorporated positive peace, negative peace and inner peace.

## **Concept and Dimensions of Peace**

The debate on the concept of peace, whether the concept should be broad or narrow, how far its functional and geographic reach should extend and how it should be positioned in the multi-layered problem of peace could not move further until Johan Galtung<sup>1</sup> broke the prevailing concept of peace. Before that peace was generally understood as 'absence of war or violence'. This definition of peace

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subordinated peace to the main subject -war and violence. If peace is defined as absence of violence, then the concept of violence should be broad enough to include all forms and dimensions of violence. To Johan Galtung violence included both physical and structural violence. Thus, for him, violence includes physical violence where the actor is visible and action is direct and structural violence where the actor is most often invisible and hence violence is indirect. He also identifies absence of physical violence as negative peace and absence of structural violence as positive peace. Positive peace is also referred to as social justice. Thus peace conceived in this way is not only a matter of control and reduction of overt use of violence but also of vertical development - that is, participation, decentralization, and co-decision. This indicates that peace theory is not only related to conflict theory, but also to development theory. Czempiel<sup>2</sup> defined peace as a model process of declining violence and increasing justice. This definition includes the dimension of time. Henkel (1993)<sup>3</sup> defines peace as the normal state of successful interaction between individuals, social collectives and political units.

All religions uphold peace. A study of the religious concept of peace would reveal that they cultivate peace at two levels, one at the practical level of worldly life and the other at spiritual level. Peace at practical level is concerned with inter personal; inter cultural and international relationships while peace at spiritual level is inner personal. Peace at spiritual level is also designated as inner peace. In other words, on the one hand peace is defined and understood negatively as the absence of hostility and war/violence, and on the other hand it is seen as the harmony and wholesomeness achieved through a proper relationship with God. They also preach that lasting peace depends on harmonious relationship between three subjects- man, God and nature- characterized by justice and truth.

David Gee<sup>4</sup> analyzes the concept of peace in bible which is referred to as shalom, in terms of integrity and health in relationships. He points out that what differentiates us is valued together with what unifies us is shalom-peace. More clearly, the fundamental statement of shalom is "I, we, you all matter". This reflects a desire for shared freedom. That is, there is mutuality of relationships. Jesus, before going to cross, tells his disciples about inner peace, the peace of heart which comes as the outcome of one's relationship with God, fellow human beings and nature. A person who has inner peace has no hatred or anger towards anyone, even the enemies who are after his life. In this context David Gee defines peace as a condition where people are able to live in contentment without fear and this condition is possible only where justice prevails. Here one person or group can't enjoy at

the expense of another. Another view on peace that he puts forward is in the context of violence at political and economic levels. At political level, consuming unsustainable amounts of world's natural resources and causing excessive pollution are violent, for they violate the integrity of our relationship with the wider world. Cultivation of consumer culture is violence in the sense that it leads to economic and ecological marginalization. Other acts of violence would include attempting to subjugate or oppress others physically, psychologically or emotionally as well as passively accepting oppression by others against oneself.

From these definitions and understandings of peace, it can be concluded that peace in its fullest sense includes inner peace or peace within man and outer peace that includes positive peace leading to harmonious, non-exploitative and just relationships between all forms of life and their environment, and negative peace which refers to a condition of absence of violence or war. To understand what peace really means, there is a need to elaborate on inner peace, positive peace and negative peace. Inner peace as pointed out earlier is peace within man and is achieved by establishing a harmonious relation between the body, mind and soul of an individual. This state is a state of human perfection and happiness. Once this state is attained, man will not have any difficulty in interacting with his fellow beings, other sentient creatures and nature with utmost love. It is the lack of inner peace that sows the seeds of hatred, conflict and violence in the society.

Positive peace in a wider prospective has two dimensions- negative and positive. The negative dimensions refer to absence of structural violence and positive dimension is the harmonious relationships between man and man, man and nature and between societies and nations. Its goal is to provide a harmonious, non-exploitative and just social condition that facilitates the universal maintenance of human rights and dignity. Mutual respect, cooperation and sharing are essential aspects of positive peace. Negative peace as discussed, is the absence of physical violence or war. It is attained by preventing physical violence at individual, societal, national and international level, stopping an ongoing war and stopping production and use of weapons.

To Gandhi, the foundation of peace is non-violence (ahimsa) and its determinant is the achievement of truth (satya). He derived his concept of ahimsa from the ascetic sources. Gandhi's concept of ahimsa ruled out all exceptions in the application of ahimsa. His non-violence is not essentially regard for all biological life, rather the non-exploitation of all sentient creatures. His view on ahimsa is non-

killing or non-injuring the body, non-hurting even by speech and also doing away with hatred, cultivation of love, compassion and altruism to all.

He tried to apply nonviolence in every walk of life- domestic, institutional, economic and political. The extension of nonviolence to the domain of economics implied the introduction of moral values as a regulating factor in international commerce<sup>5</sup>. His concept of peace transcended the working notions of international politics into the realm of ideal love (*prem*) to be practiced even if unreciprocated. Gandhi believed that inner peace and outer peace are interlinked and there is a continuum. To Gandhi, peace is an outcome of the application of non-violence at intra-personal, social, economic, political, cultural and religious levels.

### Concept and Theory of Satyagraha

The whole philosophy of Gandhi is strongly based on the twin concepts of truth and nonviolence. Satyagraha is not an exception to this. It represents a real synthesis between the two concepts, *satya* and *ahimsa*. The word satyagraha literally means 'holding fast on truth'. For Gandhi truth is the end and nonviolence is the means. Apart from truth and nonviolence, satyagraha involves various other elements like love, self-suffering and persuasion. At different points of history, there were instances of holding fast on truth without any effort to resist it through violent means and by bearing endless suffering on one's own self even in the face of the cruelest form of oppression. These instances though were not mentioned by the name satyagraha, in essence are nothing but satyagraha. Gandhi was greatly influenced by these instances and some stories in Hindu mythology, which upheld truth, self-suffering, and persuasion. Two characters in Hindu mythology, Prahlada and Harichandra, profoundly influenced him. Prahlada strongly stood for his conviction even when put to suffering and always prayed for the protection and transformation in his oppressor. Harichandra's exemplary devotion to truth combined with the spirit of non-retaliation even when he was put to suffering and had to sacrifice everything in life impressed Gandhi very much. Gandhi has acknowledged that his family too was responsible in imparting him lessons of satyagraha. He confesses that his wife Kasturba was also among his teachers who taught him lessons of resistance and self-suffering. To quote Gandhi's own words "I learnt the lesson of nonviolence (satyagraha) from my wife. I tried to bend her to my will. Her determined resistance to my will on the one hand, and her quite submission to the suffering my stupidity involved on the other, ultimately made me ashamed of myself and cured me of my stupidity

in my thinking that I was born to rule over her, and in the end she became my teacher in nonviolence. And what I did in South Africa was but an extension of the rule of satyagraha she unwittingly practices in her own person". Other sources that influenced Gandhi are Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism that believed ahimsa as the greatest duty. Thinkers, Socrates, Tolstoy, and Thoreau have also influenced Gandhi by their conviction and self-suffering without retaliation. For many of them ahimsa, self-suffering and persuasion were religious acts. Gandhi's uniqueness lies in the fact that while satyagraha is a religious/spiritual concept, he applied it widely in spheres of individual, social, economic and cultural interactions with the Western civilization, modernity and tradition.

Gandhi first applied his struggle based on nonviolence and truth to fight against the evils and injustices done to the Indians in South Africa by the British who ruled the country. The process initiated under the leadership of Gandhi was initially known as passive resistance. He himself felt that the term passive resistance as understood by the English people did not convey the real philosophy behind the process. Gandhi made this clear when he replied to Mr. Hosken<sup>6</sup> and many others who raised the point that Indians resorted to passive resistance, as it is the weapon of the weak. Gandhi saw his struggle as nothing but resistance to the evil and not the evildoers, self-suffering rather than hurting others and aimed at transforming the oppressors by making them conscious of their wrongs. This is something different from passive resistance as perceived by the English. This kind of resistance can only be put up by a satyagrahi. Gandhi considered Jesus Christ as the champion of satyagraha who fought against evils rather than evil doers. To borrow Gandhi's own words about this, "Europe mistook the bold and brave resistance of Jesus of Nazareth for passive resistance as if it were of the weak. As I read the New Testament for the first time, I detected no passivity, no weakness about Jesus as depicted in the four gospels and the meaning became clear to me when I read Tolstoy's *Harmony of the Gospels* and his other kindred writings. Has not the west paid heavily in regarding Jesus as a passive resistor?"<sup>7</sup> It is on the same philosophy the struggle of Indians in South Africa was built up.

It is the power of truth and nonviolence (soul force) that helped the Indians to keep themselves away from the use of physical force, no matter how badly they suffered. Gandhi coined the term 'satyagraha' for the first time to refer to the resistance Indians put up against the evil and discriminatory practices of the English in South Africa. It was Mangal Gandhi who proposed the name '*sadagraha*' to designate the struggle in South Africa. Gandhi corrected it to

'satyagraha' to represent the whole idea behind the struggle more explicitly. The word is a combination of two words 'satya' (implies love) and 'agraha' (firmness). In Gandhi's own words it is a force of Truth and Love or Nonviolence. Thus, satyagraha is seen as love force or soul force. Satyagraha seeks to extend to the groups and communities the laws of love and self-suffering and make it a social force from individual virtue. Its basic assumption is essential goodness in man. Satyagrahi is fearless and trusts the opponent even when the opponent plays tricks repeatedly, as implicit trust in human nature is the very essence of his creed. A satyagrahi should win the heart of his opponent by love and persuasion. The intention of satyagraha is conversion and not coercion. Such an approach would require patient self-suffering, which is an outcome of the inner force in man. This process of self-suffering is a means of self-purification. Examining and reexamining one's actions bring about further self-purification. Thus, satyagraha while destroying evil, wins the opponent by love force and purifies the satyagrahi.

Gandhi was a *karmayogi* who practiced what he preached. He put to practice satyagraha in various forms in his life. Most important of them are civil disobedience, non-cooperation and fasting. Civil disobedience is nothing but the civil (nonviolent) breach of unjust and immoral laws of the state. It is the inherent right of a citizen. It is not a state of lawlessness but presupposes a law-abiding spirit combined with self-restraint. Though it was Thoreau<sup>8</sup> who first practised civil disobedience by resisting the law of the state, Gandhi feels that his civil disobedience is different from that conceived by him as it didn't ensure nonviolence. In due course, Gandhi himself substituted 'civil resistance' for 'civil disobedience' as the former term conveyed the nonviolent nature of the movement better.

Non co-operation is a means that immediately paralyses injustice or corrupt state. The process of non-cooperation involves making people conscious of the injustice and their duty to resist. No doubt non-cooperation is of nonviolent character. It is based on the recognition of the authority to rule or enforce its values. Gandhi calls it as "an expression of anguished love."<sup>9</sup> Fasting is one of the most important weapons of sathyagrahi. In this process suffering is self-inflicted while in the other forms of sathyagraha—civil disobedience and non-cooperation - violence is inflicted by the opponent state by punishing the participants. This instance purifies sathyagrahi. Jainism and Islam also consider fasting as a means of self-purification. The only condition that Gandhi put forward in the practice of fasting is that fasting should not be directed towards an opponent, as it becomes a form of coercion and therefore ceases to be nonviolent. It was to be

taken only against ones near and dear with a view to reforming them and dissuading them from doing wrong. Gandhi's own words about this are clear: "fasting can be resorted to only against a lover, not to exhort rights, but to reform him. . . .I fasted to reform those who loved me."<sup>10</sup>

Gandhi believed that the votary of truth is just like a scientist, so has to follow the methods of scientific enquiry- unbiased observation, experimentation, formulation of hypothesis and verification. The sathyagrahi has to have the readiness to revise formulations in the light of fresh evidence that necessitated revision or the abandonment of old formulations and beliefs. It is this spirit of a scientist that made Gandhi say that the only consistency that he was concerned with was consistency with 'Truth' as he saw it, and not consistency with what he had said or believed earlier to be Truth.<sup>11</sup> According to Gandhi the very nature of Truth is such that you can reach it only through the scientific method- objectivity, freedom from prejudice, tolerance, persuasion, nonviolence and love.<sup>12</sup>

Gandhi believed that being equipped with superior type of consciousness the human being is able to be conscious of the state of interconnectedness. Being aware of one's presence in all, and the presence of all in one, one feels a sense of identity with all creation. "It is the vision and experience of oneness that reinforced Gandhi's faith in advaita. . . .Gandhi's belief in oneness did not stop with all human beings or animate beings. He wanted to identify himself with the meanest or lowliest of all creations -including creatures that crawl.<sup>13</sup> Gandhi saw oneness in spirit and matter also. This means, spiritual phenomena could cause physical consequences and vice versa. Satyagraha initiated by Gandhi is an expression of synthesis of science and spirituality, which has been understood as process, method/ technique and movement that is capable of application in social, economic, political, cultural, religious, and spiritual spheres. It was proved capable of bringing change in all these spheres.

### **Sociology of Satyagraha as Social Movement**

Social movements are conscious collective actions informed of an ideology, aided by an organizational weapon and initiated by a core person or a group to bring about change in any direction using any means. That is, movements are deliberate mobilizations to bring about rapid transformation.<sup>14</sup> They go through a life cycle, from gestation to formation and consolidation. They seldom emerge spontaneously; they require long period of preparation both at the individual and society level. No social movement arises until there is a political opportunity, a context of social problem as well as a context

of communication, opening up potential for problem articulation. Social movements that strike a fundamental chord and touch basic tensions in the society have the potential for generating a social movement. Whatever may be the character of the movement-revolutionary or reformist- their objective is to change the status quo in some way.

In 1930s and 1940s sociologists conceptualized social movements either as isolated, particular social phenomena or as epiphenomenal expressions of deeper structural strain in social systems or institutional social actors mobilizing supporters for political purposes. They were understood as moments of collective creation that provides actors as they are articulated in the interaction between activists and their opposition in historically situated political and cultural contexts. They were also understood as non-institutionalized collective political behavior, which if left unattended to, threatened the stability of life. Smelser<sup>15</sup> rooted the emergence of collective behavior in spontaneous responses to structural strains in society. Marxists have tended to view social movements with expectation and anticipation. Movements for Marxists are taken as collective expression of discontent and political bases for social change. The collective actors here were self-activating classes rather than faceless masses. The issue here is what social movements represent in terms of their social basis, their class composition. This in turn is related to their potential as well as the quality of challenge they raise to the existing social order<sup>16</sup>. Smelser classified movements into two categories-general movements and social movements. For him, general movements represented long term drifts and shifts in social values, gradual change in attitude and consciousness, which led to changes in behavior like the relation between man and woman, changing roles in work place and home and so on. In contrast social movements were more immediately observable (visible), more or less coherent outbursts of collective behavior that emerged now and then to push the long term changes along.

The resource mobilization approach (Zald and MaCarthy)<sup>17</sup> developed to explain the social movements challenged the collective behavior approach. In resource mobilization approach, the starting point of analysis is the organization of the movement rather than the individual. Thus the approach does not look into why an individual has joined the social movement but is concerned with the effectiveness with which the movement uses the resources-people, material, and ideas- in attempting to achieve its goal. Here the prime question is not why individuals participate in the movement but why some movements are more successful than others. Another approach that

focuses on individual motivations developed by Jenkins is very close to resource mobilization approach. Charles Tilly<sup>18</sup> and others have undertaken studies on movements or of individuals within movements. This school is known as particularist school and they consider social movements as vehicles for political socialization. Tilly defines the collective action typical of movements in terms of the pursuit of common interest, and is concerned with effectiveness of tactical decision-making.

The 1960s witnessed movements, which could not be explained by any of the classical theories of social movements. The students' movements in different nations, women's movements, environment and peace movements etc., come under this category. These were classified as new social movements to distinguish them from the institutionalized old social movements of working class. The distinction also refers to fundamental shift in social structure and the emergence of post Industrial society. The Marxist and Weberian approaches to social movements were strongly rooted in industrial capitalist societies. The Marxist approach focused mainly on relations of production and the conflict between labour and capital and hence could not explain the new social movements. The resource mobilization theory was rejected by sociologists for interpretation of new social movements on the ground that the new social movements reject the establishment in all its guises. Therefore it became imperative to develop new approaches for interpreting these new generation movements.

Many European sociologists attempt to place the new social movements into broader historical context, constituting a third approach in the study of social movements. Here social movements are described as the dominant social forces of a postindustrial society and internal questions of actor motivation. Resource mobilization tend to be discarded. Thus sociologists of different nations had varied views on new social movements. Alain Touraine,<sup>19</sup> French sociologist, investigated new social movements as potential bearers of new social interest while Habermas speculated the potential civilizational role of new social movements. Touraine's notion of historicity gives special place to new social movements in actualizing the universal process of social reflectivity. For him, social movements are characterized by the realization of historicity, by the self-conscious awareness that the very foundations of society are at stake or in contest.

**Satyagraha in South Africa(1894-1914):** The year 1894 witnessed the laying of the seed of a social movement in Natal, South Africa, under the leadership of Gandhi. In a farewell meeting for Gandhi, the Indians in South Africa requested him to remain there for



some more time to find ways to resolve the issue of discrimination against Indians by the Natal Legislative Assembly. This was to thwart the move to disenfranchise the Indians which means taking away whatever little rights they enjoyed there. Gandhi wanted them to resist the move, which they agreed, and they demanded his help in doing so. They formed a committee and in its name they sent a petition to the government. As days passed more and more Indians joined the movement and offered their participation in raising funds, writing petitions and copies. By then the committee was placed on a permanent footing. The fund raising campaign was a political training also. The people were explained the cause and process of the movement. By then the news of disallowing the disenfranchisement by Lord Ripon reached and this heightened the enthusiasm and self-confidence. Along with external agitation, this opportunity was taken to transform the way of life of Indians for which the Europeans looked down on them. Meeting became forums of debates and lectures. About the movement Gandhi himself has said, "The reader can see what an amount of practical and political education Indians received."<sup>20</sup>

The movement in South Africa gathered momentum with the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance. Gandhi first read it in the Transvaal Government Gazette Extraordinary of 22nd July 1906. He regarded the Ordinance a question of life and death to Indians. In the public meeting held at the Jewish Theatre on September 11, 1906, the Indians took the oath that they will not submit to the Ordinance if it became a bill, rather they would suffer all penalties due to it. At this moment, it became imperative to give a name for the movement. To put in Gandhi's own words, "None of us knew what name to give to our movement. I then used the term 'passive resistance' in describing it. . . . As the struggle advanced, the phrase 'passive resistance' gave rise to confusion and it appeared shameful to permit this great struggle to be known only by an English name. . . . I thus, began to call the Indian movement 'satyagraha'."<sup>21</sup> Gandhi later in 1947 referring satyagraha in South Africa said, "...with the progress of the movement, it was feared that arrest would follow. So long as the movement was conducted peacefully, there was no reason for the government to resort to persecution."<sup>22</sup> These words clearly reveal that Gandhi himself considered satyagraha as a movement. It has shown all the attributes of a social movement from a sociological angle too.

Steps were then taken to resist the Black Act (Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance of 1906 which came into force as Asiatic Registration Act 1907) by submitting memorials to local Government and sending deputation to British government. Gandhi was keen in

giving due consideration to cultural and religious plurality in every action. So, he included representatives from different cultural and religious sections in all activities. On 30th January 1908, a settlement was reached between Gandhi and General Smuts. The General agreed to repeal the Asiatic Act on completing voluntary registrations by Indians. The prisoners were set free. In the meeting held to explain the settlement, Gandhi had to face some Indians who asked Gandhi what would be done if General Smuts made a breach of the agreement. As a satyagrahi, Gandhi was not afraid of trusting the opponent, for an implicit trust in human nature was the very essence of his creed. But breach in agreement forced Indians continue their struggle more vigorously. The Tolstoy farm provided shelter to the families of satyagrahis who were in jail. The final victory was of Indians. The government passed the India Relief Bill that sought remedies for all ills Indians were subjected to. The satyagraha movement in South Africa ended in 1914.

Satyagraha in South Africa can be classified as a social movement in the historical context of classical social movements/old social movements; on closer analysis it can be discerned that it contains some of the major traits of new social movements. The movement was class transcending and emphasizing more on issues related to racial discrimination. All classes of people belonging to various nationalities participated in it. It can be observed that the American Civil Right Movement in 1950s and 1960s show similarities with satyagraha in South Africa.

**The Vykam satyagraha(1924-1925):** Vykam is a village in Kerala which was in erstwhile State of Travancore. About one-sixth of the entire population of Travancore belonged to the group of untouchables. Vykam satyagraha was first of its kind in eliminating the crime of untouchability. The idea of struggle against untouchability practised in the area disturbed the minds of K.P.Kesava Menon, T.K.Madhavan, Krishnaswamy and Kelappan,<sup>23</sup> and they started the campaign. Though Gandhi did not directly lead it, it had drawn inspiration, guidance and blessings from him. It had also deeper meaning than is generally understood. Gandhi viewed this historical struggle more as a socio-religious movement than a political one for the recognition of the most elementary human rights<sup>24</sup> that were denied to a section of the society in the name of caste. It emerged as a result of the structural strain to which the untouchables were put to for long time. The upper caste Hindus in the locality did not allow the untouchables to use the public road, which passed through the Brahmin quarters and located on the side of Vykam Mahadeva temple. At all levels of the movement, participation of upper caste Hindus was visible along

with the untouchables and congress activists. Even a Syrian Christian, George Joseph was one among the initiators of the movement. The '*savarna jatha*'<sup>25</sup> organized by the caste Hindus under the leadership of Mannath Padmanabhan supported the satyagraha and submitted a memorandum to the rulers of Travancore. Sree Narayana Guru also blessed the satyagraha. This movement attracted people from all over India. Gandhi kept close watch on the progress of the movement and he visited the place in 1925. He even discouraged the Sikhs who offered to open a kitchen for the satyagrahis at Vykam because he felt that untouchability is the sin of the Hindus and they themselves have to purify.<sup>26</sup> He believed that all reforms to be sincere and lasting should come from within. Instances of self-suffering and suffering without retaliation could be observed in the course of the movement. The satyagrahis submitted to arrests instead of retaliating when attacked by opponents and police. An instance of continuing the struggle even during floods that made the satyagrahis stand in shoulder-deep water testified their willingness to suffer silently. The strain was overcome after a period of sixteen months. Entry to the roads to and near temple was allowed for untouchables. The movement ended in 1925. The movement became an inspiration for the Royal proclamation by Maharaja of Travancore that threw open the doors of the state temples to all Hindus alike, irrespective of caste and creed. Though the movement took place in the historical context, it bore some of the characteristics of new social movements like socio-religious aspect and class transcendence. The American Civil Right Movement showed many of the traits of Vykam satyagraha.

**Salt Satyagraha (1930):** Gandhi was given total freedom to chart the activity for civil disobedience movement by the Congress session held at Lahore (1929). The salt satyagraha was the result of this. Its specific objective was to protest against the tax that the British Raj imposed on salt. Under the regulations of the India Salt Act 1882, the Government enforced a monopoly on the collection or manufacturing of salt, restricting its handling to officially control salt depots and levying a tax of 46 cents on 82 lbs. Gandhi explained the reason why he decided to take up the issue of salt tax. "Next to air and water, salt is perhaps the greatest necessity of life. It is the only condiment of the poor. . . . There is no article like salt outside water by taxing which the state can reach even the starving millions, the sick, the maimed and the utterly helpless. The tax constitutes therefore the most inhuman poll tax that ingenuity of man can devise."<sup>27</sup> The subject may be trivial, but necessity of salt in everyday life of all humans may be the reason for the participation of all sections of people, especially women in large numbers. The march started on 12th March 1930 with 78 followers

from Sabarmati Ashram was bound to the shores of Dandi, a small village on the coast of Gujarat in Western India. The march covered over 241 miles and lasted for 24 days. Uniqueness of the march was the participation of students of Gujarat Vidyapith who collected data systematically from villages through which the march proceeded. Gandhi used the information so collected while he spoke to the villagers. On 5th April 1930 Gandhi picked up a lump of salt and violated the law.<sup>28</sup> The news spread and the law breaking movement swept across the country. The Government's reaction was fierce. Arrests on large scale, confiscation of property, shootings etc., were the order of the day. But, the satyagrahis stuck to self-suffering without retaliation. As Webb Miller wrote on the 'New Freeman' an eyewitness's account on one of the brutal attack on salt satyagrahis who moved forward to the salt pans protected in ditches and surrounded by a large force of police at Dharasana in Surat District on 21st May, 1930. "... As the volunteers waded through the ditches and approached the barbed wire fence, the police ordered them to retreat. But they refused to obey. Suddenly, at a word of command scores of native policemen rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod *lathis*. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. Those struck down fell sprawling unconscious or writhing with fractured skulls or broken shoulders. . . . The survivors, without breaking ranks, silently and doggedly marched on until struck down. Although everyone knew, that within few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear. . . . There was no fight, no struggle; the marchers simply walked forward till struck down."<sup>29</sup> The movement had an impact on the economy also. As part of intensifying the civil disobedience movement, the Congress Committee urged for boycott of foreign goods more vigorously. "... foreign goods worth thirty crore rupees were sealed in the city and port of Bombay; the general imports were reduced to one-third or one-fourth and cigarettes to one-sixth of the normal. . . . *Khadi* production and sale went up: the Spinners Association employed about 1,40,000 spinners, 11,500 weavers and 1000 carders. Government revenue and forest income fell".<sup>30</sup> Salt satyagraha that began with the breach of salt laws and went through nonviolent raids on salt pans and depots, breach of other laws, boycott of foreign articles, general non cooperation with government etc., came to an end with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 5 1931.

The salt satyagraha was no doubt a social movement that formed an integral part of the general movement- Indian freedom movement. It was a social movement against the State's control over natural

resources that so far was at the free disposal of people. Harsh Sethi<sup>31</sup> categorises this type of protest as environmental movement. The higher participation of women in the 'Chipko movement' in post independent India can be seen similar to their participation in salt satyagraha. In both cases control of natural resources by external agents affected women more adversely.

**Anti-war Satyagraha (1940-1941)**<sup>32</sup>: Anti-war satyagraha is the one which remained unique among the satyagraha movements led by Gandhi. It developed as a protest against dragging India into Second World War. The British Government in India was warned by the Congress to stay away from dragging India into war without the consent of the people. At the same time, the Government declined the demand of Indians to recognize their right to freedom of speech. This time, Gandhi had ruled out mass civil disobedience, for he did not wish to embarrass the Government. He opted for individual satyagraha. Thus, the social movement, 'individual satyagraha' took shape in an environment in which it became essential to protect the basic human right –not to participate in war. In the discussion with the Viceroy on 29th and 30th September 1940, Gandhi demanded the freedom to preach the war policy of Congress in a nonviolent manner. The Viceroy was ready to give only conditional freedom of speech that prohibited the speaker from persuading people to stay away from war and war-effort. However, Gandhi denied the offer and decided to continue the anti-war propaganda. "From October 17, 1940 to December 1941, the movement passed through four phases. In the first phase only the very select persons were asked to offer satyagraha, for instance, Bhave and Jawaharlal Nehru. In the second phase that began in the middle of November and lasted till the beginning of January 1941, satyagrahis were chosen to represent the Congress Working Committee, the All India Congress Committee, and the central and provincial legislatures. During the third phase from January to April 1941, a wider choice was exercised. The fourth phase is noteworthy for the protest of Rabindranath Tagore against the barbarism of war."<sup>33</sup> Rabindranath Tagore declared in his world message that "It is no longer possible for me to retain my respect for that mockery of civilization, which believes in ruling by force and has no faith in freedom at all. By miserly denial of all that is best in their civilization, by withholding true human relationship from Indians, the English have effectively closed for us all paths to progress".<sup>34</sup> During third phase, 2,200 people had been jailed and in fourth phase 20,000 people were convicted.<sup>35</sup>

It was Vinoba Bhave who became the first individual satyagrahi. In Paunar, on 17th October 1940, Vinoba Bhave made a public speech

on the Congress war policy and exhorted the people not to help the war effort, as all wars are immoral and bad. Vinoba Bhave was arrested. Gandhi asked some congressmen to march on foot to Delhi and propagate the evils of war and preach that nonviolence was the best method to resist all wars. In this social movement, 30,000 people were arrested and put in jail and the British collected a penalty of 6 lakhs. The satyagraha continued till the end of 1941. The anti-war satyagraha had the characteristics of a peace movement.

### **Sociology of Satyagraha as Peace movement**

Michael Mann<sup>36</sup> has rightly pointed out that, until recently, sociology has not paid much attention to the subject war and peace. It was only since last two centuries that peace movements have been brought to scene. The ideology and strategy of the peace movements varied with their composition and the political environment in which they were functioning. Still their general consensus was to stop an ongoing war, prevent an impending war, or educating contemporaries to create a new world order. The earliest known peace movement was 'the friends of people' established in U.K. and U.S. in 1815-1816 in reaction to Napoleonic wars. The emergence of peace movements coincided with the rise of capitalism and construction of the European state system. The Quakers or non-conformist Protestants formed peace societies. They developed a peace culture, as they believed that to establish peace, human beings as individuals, as social animals, should be peace-minded. That is, peace has to do more with individual values and social relationships. This strand of peace thinking includes the tradition of absolute pacifism. That is, individual commitment to nonviolence. Pacifist is one who pledges himself to renounce war. Pacifists belong to different groups-utilitarian, liberals, Quakers etc— but work with the same objective of resistance to all wars, propaganda against war and war preparations, non-participation in war and readiness to suffer for their conviction. Gandhi believed that conflict of interests is unavoidable, but for its nonviolent solution, the basic truth of the conflict has to be found through inquiry. He insisted that the actions taken should not hurt the evildoer but should only be against the evil or injustice. For this, Gandhi's arms would be satyagraha, educating the public on truth, self-purification, mass demonstration, civil disobedience, fasting etc. His aim was not mere stopping of violence but of developing positive nonviolent resistance to all evils and exploitations. Such an environment would help man to develop his/her inner potentialities. Gandhi's peace movement satyagraha differed from pacifists in three aspects: (1) It is not for mere ending of war, but the removal of seeds of war from the minds of men; (2) Satyagraha

is a way of life that attaches absolute values of truth and nonviolence (3) Purity of means is most important in satyagraha. Peace movements linked to arms race (1889- 1914) showed maturity and people from different walks of life participated in it. The peace movements of 1970s referred to demonstration and social action of the kind directed at the nuclear arms race.

A peace movement is a sustained, organized attempt by a group of people to prevent a war from breaking out, to end an ongoing war, to build a just and peaceful society and or build a peaceful world order.<sup>37</sup> Peace movements can also be defined as socio-political movement against war, against armament and measures directed at war, and with the aim of abolishing war and surmounting its courses by the rejection of military service and/or the creation of an international order based on the common wheel, including mechanism of nonviolent conflict settlement.<sup>38</sup> Peace movement, thus for the most part is a disarmament movement or a negative peace movement. But, a peace movement in its entirety should be a nonviolent social movement that ensures inner peace, positive peace and negative peace. From the above deliberations on peace, satyagraha and social movements, it can be argued that satyagraha is a peace movement. Gandhi has rightly pointed out this when he said, "It (satyagraha) is a movement intended to replace methods of violence and a movement based entirely upon truth."<sup>39</sup> This implies that satyagraha is a peace movement. Nonviolent social action is the very heart of thought and political practice of Gandhi. Satyagraha is the highest level of nonviolent social movement. His experiment and experience in satyagraha has tremendous importance to the current peace movement. Peace movement has the capacity to create a culture of peace that enhances the values of nonviolence, harmony, togetherness, love and openness between human beings, humans and other sentient creatures, and man and nature. Satyagraha has proved its capacity to create the culture of peace.

From the above discussions, Satyagraha in South Africa, Vytoms satyagraha and Salt satyagraha can be seen as positive peace movements that reduced structural violence manifested in different forms-racial discrimination, untouchability and grabbing of natural resources from the people by the state. Anti-war satyagraha, however, is a negative peace movement which was realized through non cooperation with Second World War.

In a letter to Adolf Hitler, which the British Government refused to transfer, Gandhi made very clear the policy of Indians towards war and British rule in India. It says, "... We resist British imperialism no less than Nazism. If there is difference, it is in degree...Our

resistance doesn't mean harm to the British people. We will convert them not defeat them on the battlefield. Ours is an unarmed revolt against the British Rule. But whether we convert them or not we are determined to make their rule impossible by nonviolent non-cooperation. It is a method in its nature undefeatable. . . . Our rulers can have our land and bodies, but not our souls... In nonviolent technique, there is no such thing as defeat. It is all 'do or die' without killing or hurting. . . ." The letter continues "I, therefore appeal to you in the name of humanity to stop war. You will loose nothing by referring all the matters between you and Great Britain to an international tribunal."<sup>40</sup> These words of Gandhi make us think 'Is not Quit India movement (1942) a continuation or developed form of the anti-war satyagraha? That is a negative peace movement is transformed/ developed into a peace movement by which both negative and positive peace can be achieved. The satyagrahis while converting opponents transform themselves through self-suffering and self-purification. They enjoy the attainment of inner peace with which they are able to see oneness in all life.

Our deliberations on peace, satyagraha, sociology of satyagraha as social movement and peace movement reveal that satyagraha is the most revolutionary contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to socio-political thought and action that empowers man for his fuller realization through experiencing the oneness of spirit and matter. Satyagraha is Gandhi's 'gift to mankind'.

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"SPREAD THE WORD — THE WORD OF GANDHIJI"

# Challenging Grand Narratives and the Fatalism They Sponsor

*Ronald J. Terchek*

GANDHI PROVIDES A powerful voice that challenges some of the central axioms of our time. In the process, he champions those who have been ignored or dominated in grand narratives, whether ancient or modern, and denies their claims that they are natural and objective. Any grand narrative attempts to gather all of the disparate, sometimes messy pieces of life and society into a coherent whole which explains why things are what they are and what must be done to make them fit better, if not perfectly. In the process, the grand narrative is able to assign labels to people, practices, and all sorts of other things, holding some are positive and some are not. From this perspective, some must be nurtured and others impeded; some must be counted as allies and others as enemies.

For Gandhi, any grand narrative is only one way of thinking, and a flawed one at that. Among his major objections to grand narratives are their proclivity to deny the validity of other claims to knowledge and the truth and to universalize their applications for everyone under its sway. Today, the dominant grand narratives rotate around modernity, such as free markets, economic efficiency, and productivity as well as globalization and consumption. However, older grand narratives still persist, such as those revolving around gender, caste, and communalism. These narratives share distinctive but persistent logics concerning what they take to be necessary inequalities and deserved hierarchies, a tendency to ignore or excuse sufferings and injustices (including those that they sponsor), an intolerance of

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alternative ways of thinking and acting, and claims that their priorities, rules, rewards, and punishments are good for everyone in the long run. We are, from this perspective, fated to make the best we can, learning to adapt and adjust to the situation in which we find ourselves.

Gandhi's voice represents an early refusal to accept the story that modernity is telling about itself. I enlist Gandhi as a critic of the universalizing impulse and fatalism of grand narratives, whether ancient or recent and argue that his primary interest is in preserving the autonomy of individuals.<sup>1</sup> Although I take up ancient grand narratives later in the article, I concentrate on Gandhi's questioning modernity, not to conclude that it has nothing to offer, but to maintain that modernity can not set the exclusive standards of what constitutes the good life.<sup>2</sup> One reason he finds alternative logics require a hearing is not that they invariably contain the truth but rather that they offer the possibilities for contestation and controversy, that is they are political.<sup>3</sup> On Gandhi's account, these neglected alternatives usually grasp parts of the truth and often provide fresh ways of seeing the world and the means to challenge late-modern versions of orthodoxy. Moreover, they are often expressed locally, that is, in a vernacular that makes sense to people in their particular place and culture.

Gandhi's interrogation of modernity is one of a selective but skeptical borrower. Even though he finds the Enlightenment project encumbered with pretentious claims to know the truth, he sees no need to completely reject modernity out of hand.<sup>4</sup> Hence, Gandhi talks about the equality of everyone in his assault on untouchability; he speaks of the rights of women, including their right to govern themselves; and he attacks colonialism as a negation of the modern ideal of equal regard and respect for everyone.

### **The Grand Narrative**

Gandhi distinguishes himself from those who want to write a grand narrative. He finds a penchant in modernity to homogenize the world and reduce what is unique to the status of remnants of a deficient past. But it is the uniqueness of cultures and different human beings that excites Gandhi and makes him suspicious of the tendency of modernity to seek general rules or procedures to describe our world and correct what departs from its claims to truth.

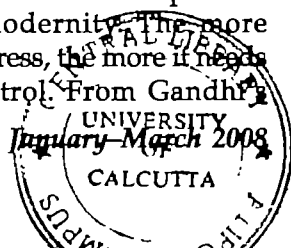
With modern narratives, we are asked to surrender what is unique when it fails to conform to their plans and ideas of progress. Progress becomes a benevolent but blind process that proclaims we are, on the whole, better off than we had been and promises that the future will be better still. Such promises can be met sometimes because of the specific meaning accorded to the term "better off." The promises of

modernity receive their validation by looking at the material benefits won by successful members of the modernized sectors of society and ignoring the rest.

Gandhi recoils at this account not only because it excuses the inequality it spawns and the poverty it sponsors but also because it smothers community and the autonomy he believes community promotes. For him, autonomy is not to be confused with modern conceptions of individualism which, he insists, separates persons from one another. On Gandhi's reading of modern individualism, persons are largely left to their own devices and made responsible for the successes and failures that visit them. Gandhi fears that such a stance ignores how much individuals depend on others.

To replace the isolation and loneliness he sees emerging in the modern world, Gandhi places men and women in an interdependent cosmos where he imagines that each person not only has dignity and respects others but also carries duties to others. For Gandhi, this occurs when human beings are embedded in a vibrant community which provides them with moral standards to judge themselves and the world around them as well as social networks which can serve as a source of mutual assistance and respect.<sup>5</sup> For this to occur, Gandhi believes that power must be dispersed and inequalities narrowed. Then, he argues, a self emerges that is confident in its own integrity as well as proud of the contribution it is making to the broader community.<sup>6</sup>

But Gandhi does not believe this is happening in his time; when modernity appears, initially, its occupation is partial. Some parts of society are modernized but others are not, and society becomes incoherent as the old and new parts often move in different, often conflicting directions. It frequently means that some are much worse off—socially, psychologically, economically, and/or politically—than they were before. From the story told in the narrative of progress, however, this is a transition cost which, over time, will lead to increasing productivity and growth, eventually reaching those now excluded. This argument holds that modernity can keep its promises and is, therefore, the legitimate way to proceed. This Gandhi rejects. As he sees matters, modernity can never fulfill its promises of full emancipation. One reason is that the promises are incommensurable: greater growth requires more discipline; more science leads to more fragmentation; more individualism diminishes a sense of community and personal responsibility. Taken together, these consequences contradict the humanitarian impulses of modernity. The more modernity honors its economic promises of progress, the more it needs to normalize, regularize, supervise, and control. From Gandhi's



perspective, it cannot help but diminish alternative ways of thinking and acting if it is to foster more economic growth.

He also fears that when the grand narrative of modernity becomes the normal way of seeing things, people are apt to ignore or rationalize the injustice, hierarchies, and domination it spawns, not only on others but also on themselves. When costs are seen, they are frequently taken to be unavoidable and hence excusable ones that will be redeemed by future progress. In accepting such an attitude, according to Gandhi, individuals fail to recognize what is happening to them and accept their condition as natural and inevitable. As a consequence, they allow themselves to become the playthings of an historic process they think that they cannot fully understand, much less control. On Gandhi's reading, the idea of inevitable progress, for example, introduces not a march to emancipation but a new form of fatalism which disenfranchises individuals who are now assigned places in a process outside of their reach and influence.

### **Gandhi's Problematizing Impulse**

In his efforts to unsettle of the premises that many hold to be beyond the realm of scrutiny, Gandhi seeks to show how the constructedness of the world favors some over others, often leads to practices of domination, and legitimizes disciplinary practices. In many ways, Gandhi questions much that is taken for granted in the modern world. He argues that modernity is not neutral or objective but carries extraordinary costs, even though it often provides some welcome goods. Gandhi extends his argument to claim that what the modern world has constructed is not the culmination of a universal rationality but a particular rationality that threatens to deprive men and women of their autonomy, some more severely than others.

This critique can be seen in his quest for Indian national independence. He claims that his primary quarrel is not with the British; his fight is with modernity.<sup>7</sup> In its effort to become the dominant way we think and organize the world, modernity makes diversity and plurality remainders of a forgotten past.<sup>8</sup> For Gandhi, Indian independence cannot mean only, or even primarily, Indian national sovereignty.<sup>9</sup> For him, it must mean that every Indian is self-governing. In this context, British imperialism is only a part of the problem.

As Gandhi understands matters, modernity advances the claim that its knowledge supersedes all other claimants to knowledge. On his account, it does this in several ways. For one, it introduces a science and a technology which can discover and produce things that traditional science and technology cannot. In the process, modernity

introduces its own way of organizing the world, determining what is important in it and what is not.<sup>10</sup> And it does this, according to Gandhi, not with brute force, although this is sometimes employed, but by disciplining individuals into accepting the many practices of modernity as legitimate. On his account, too many Indians have already acquiesced in accepting claims of the superiority of modernity and have, in the process, been drawn into a web of discipline where they reconstitute themselves and their understanding of the world.<sup>11</sup> This can be seen in his observation that his "resistance to Western civilization is really a resistance to its indiscriminate and thoughtless imitation based on the assumption that Asians are fit only to copy everything that comes from the West."<sup>12</sup>

Gandhi's assaults on modernity emerge clearly in his famous, or infamous, attacks on modern medicine, railroads, and machinery in *Hind Swaraj*.<sup>13</sup> One way of reading Gandhi on these matters, and not an uncommon way in either India or elsewhere, is to find him reactionary. But there is another way of grasping his meaning and that is to notice that he wants to problematize the apparent benefits of science and technology and see it as constructed phenomena that hide their unwelcome consequences and disciplinary character. He believes that if he can demonstrate that modernity is not benign and that it carries its own forms of inequality, domination, and normalization, then he can break the chains of fatalism and energize Indians to mobilize and resist.<sup>14</sup>

We see this in his critique of science where he calls attention to its paradoxes. Science promises both control and the truth, but Gandhi questions these claims. He thinks that in a perverse and unexpected way, we have lost control of the march of science.<sup>15</sup> When he writes about medicine, for example, he fears people have handed over control of their bodies to others.<sup>16</sup> He also argues that modern medicine's focus on the individual body de-emphasizes other reasons for illness (such as environmental ones).

Gandhi finds that as modern science reaches to control nature, it is frequently employed to control people. As he understands matters, India would not have been colonized without modern science which enabled the British to assert their sovereignty. According to Gandhi, "It is not the British people who are ruling India but it is modern civilization, through its railways, telegraph, telephones, and almost every invention which has been claimed to be a triumph of civilization."<sup>17</sup>

For all of his misgivings about modern science, he denies that he is "an opponent, a foe of science." Rather, he claims, he is concerned "about the misuse of science."<sup>18</sup> What this means in practice can only



be controversial, but Gandhi insists that too often the subject matter of modern scientific inquiry and the ways that science are applied are hardly neutral. Unless modern science is problematized, he argues, its worst features will never be resisted. Even though Gandhi is not forthcoming about the appropriate boundaries for modern science and its uses, he insists that scientific knowledge should ultimately contribute to self-knowledge.<sup>19</sup> And he insists that its material benefits must be directed at the most vulnerable. For Gandhi, "The individual," not science, the economy, or technology, "is the one supreme consideration."<sup>20</sup> With this in mind, he directs some of his most pointed problematizing efforts to a critique of the grand narrative of progress that is at the heart of modernity.

### Modern Fatalism

Grand narratives tell us that the people we have become is a matter that cannot be significantly otherwise and if we try to make it otherwise, we will fall into an abyss. If we diminish, much less stop growth, then havoc will follow. If we dismantle much centralization and bureaucracy, we invite chaos. If we challenge complexity, we give up all kinds of future good things. If we undermine progress, we unglue all that is positive. If, if, if, .... then all kinds of bad things happen. However, Gandhi finds that we do not direct such matters as growth, centralization, bureaucracies, or complexity. He fears that we have allowed ourselves, in very critical ways, to be directed by them. Here I have in mind much more than such matters as bureaucratic regulations which tell us to do this but not that or economic imperatives that displace traditional occupations, although each is part of the problem for Gandhi. Rather, he holds that because (and not in spite of) modernity, human beings are often not, in the ordinary course of events, in control. A process (or many processes) beyond their comprehension propel matters along. When this occurs, the best that people can do is to explain matters after the fact and hope for the best in the future. This is one expression of the new fatalism of the late modern era that Gandhi finds disturbing and debilitating.

Are we, then, fated to take the current situation as intractable, carried along by an uncontrollable momentum and robbed of the chance to have a say in these matters? To have a say about who we are? Gandhi thinks not.<sup>21</sup> To have a chance in gaining some of the control we want, he finds it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the causes that rob us of our autonomy. He tells us, "discontent is a very useful thing. So long as a man is contented with his present lot, so long is it difficult to persuade him to come out of it."<sup>22</sup> This leads

him to question modernity at its core. He wants us to grasp its axioms and assumptions that we take for granted and recognize their often hidden, negative consequences. In this way, he believes we can throw off the blinders that have been provided by modern fatalism.

When people are no longer fatalistic, Gandhi holds they can practice *satyagraha* or nonviolent direct action which challenges injustice. In confronting what appears to be solid and permanent obstacles that are unaffected by human aspirations or actions, Gandhi holds that apparently weak and powerless individuals are able to take charge of their own lives. But fatalistic people are antithetical to Gandhi's *satyagrahi* who have a self-confidence that they are not defined by or trapped in some grand narrative that robs them of the choice to assert and act on what they think is just. For Gandhi, the moral assertiveness of individuals puts them in charge of what they take to be important and what they do. In his own life, Gandhi confronts fatalism with his civil disobedience, taking on the British empire and challenging various elites in his own country.

### Gandhi's Archeology

In order to resist the totalizing claims and fatalism carried by grand narratives, Gandhi offers his own archeological approach to digging out truths as a way of empowering those who have been dominated or marginalized by the prevailing order, whether traditional or modern.<sup>23</sup> In proceeding in his nonacademic way, he devotes himself to uncovering actual practices that disable individuals. In his archeological excavations, he searches for fragments of the truth that he believes have been covered over. For Gandhi, these fragments speak to the autonomy of all persons as well as to the transcendent nature of everyone. What follows in this section focuses on Gandhi's excavations of his own tradition, but he also employs an archeological strategy in his critique of modernity.

As he understands matters, each tradition expresses fragments of the truth in its own vernacular and symbols. But because these are the expressions of human beings, they are subject both to the decay that describes the human condition as well as the possibilities for renewal and revitalization.<sup>24</sup> His archeological exercises have three dimensions. One is to identify the fragments of the truth he believes lie at the core of traditions, including his own; a second is to uncover the layers of sediment that have hidden the core and seek to stand in its place. Finally, he conveys the findings of his excavation in the local dialect of the marginalized so they can act.

He employs these strategies in his campaign on behalf of dalits attempting to open the Vykam Temple Road, in his work with striking

textile workers in Ahmedabad, and in his salt *satyagraha*.<sup>25</sup> And they appear in his arguments regarding the equality of women. His archeological approach does not look at traditional texts or practices as sacrosanct expressions of unchallengeable knowledge. Rather, he wants to move beyond standard readings of traditional practices and expose those that spawn domination. When he turns to gender relations, he finds that "The ancient laws were made by seers who were men. The women's experience, therefore, is not represented in them. Strictly speaking, as between man and woman, neither should be regarded as superior or inferior."<sup>26</sup> For equality to emerge, he urges women to challenge what has been fabricated for them. To do this, it is essential for women to refuse to be intimidated by traditional practices and to decline to accept an inferior position in the social order that they have been taught is natural. Gandhi wants women to break with the story they have heard countless times that they are fated to accept their subordinate status.<sup>27</sup>

We see this again in his critique of untouchability and his excavation of layers of sedimentation to uncover what he takes to be the true Hinduism. His reading of ancient texts reveals to him that although untouchability is sanctioned in contemporary Hindu practice, it "disfigures" the core of Hinduism.<sup>28</sup> Holding that Hindu practice roams from its ideals when it embraces untouchability, he calls for its elimination. Part of his reconstructive archeology is to deny commonly held interpretations in order to propose an alternative that he thinks embodies the original meaning of his own tradition. So, he argues, "Untouchability is not only not a part and parcel of Hinduism, but a plague, which it is the burden of every Hindu to combat."<sup>29</sup>

For all of the variety in his many archeological efforts, the purpose of his expeditions is to offer emancipatory materials to those at the periphery to enable them to voice their own needs and assert their own dignity.<sup>30</sup> He argues that there is an underlying unity in the core of ancient traditions that has been lost over the centuries and needs to be uncovered and practiced. He sees the members of different traditions grasping different fragments of the truth, and when they adhere to its core, Gandhi argues, they have materials to judge themselves and others.<sup>31</sup> However, he insists, these fragments, precisely because they are fragments, do not give anyone warrant to impose their truths on others.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, Gandhi finds these fragments are sufficiently robust to challenge the fatalism he sees embedded in modernity as well as to confront the fatalism that is spawned by an unreflective acceptance of traditional practices that justify domination. Freed from such fatalism, women, Dalits, and others need not accept the way things are.

His archeology is not confined to traditional knowledge and practices. It is deployed to uncover the axioms and assumptions of modernity and the costs it engenders. Much of *Hind Swaraj* is devoted to uncovering the core of modernity, its costs, and its consequences. His excursions, for example, into railways, modern medicine, lawyers, and the like are meant to both expose their failures as well as to free people of their fatalism so that they might act as empowered and hopeful men and women.

### Old and New Expressions of Power

For some, the modern state serves as the primary vehicle for emancipation; others find the state oppressive and hold that if confined, civil society can become free. What we find in each of these accounts is the prominence given to the state and the need to make it a focal point of our attention. These are logical arguments stemming from conventional ideas of sovereignty. There can only be one sovereign; some power must stand above all other forms of power and, therefore, should be obeyed. Gandhi challenges such reasoning and refuses to concentrate on the state as the exclusive site of power. To be sure, it is an important locale of power for him, but he finds the state sharing power with myriad other repositories of power.<sup>33</sup>

Gandhi holds that much power is embedded in traditional practices such as caste and gender relations as well as in modern economic and social practices and modern claims to knowledge as well as in the state. We see this in Gandhi's denial that if only the seat of sovereignty changes from London to New Delhi, then India will be emancipated.<sup>34</sup> What is necessary, on his account, is that the institutions of civil society change and the debilitating consequences of modernity as well as ancient forms of domination are openly challenged. For this to happen, Gandhi wants people to reject fatalism and become political.

Gandhi participates in politics, he tells us, "only because politics encircle us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries. I wish, therefore, to wrestle with the snake."<sup>35</sup> In this way he departs from those who ignore the state or take a fatalistic position that nothing can be done.<sup>36</sup> He finds, most obviously, that the British colonial state cannot be escaped or ignored. But any effective resistance in the name of autonomy, he argues, must do more than take on the coercive state. As important as the state is as a site of power, Gandhi thinks that it represents only a part of the problem. He finds that over time, disciplinary networks have evolved which direct and manage people and deprive them of their autonomy. For Gandhi, disciplinary power does not rely on the visible coercion

of conventional state power. From his perspective, modernity coughs up rules that insist that people redefine themselves. For him, this reconstructed self accepts the new rules as necessary and takes their construction as appropriate. Disciplinary power is so dangerous, according to Gandhi, because it attempts to disguise itself and pretends it is not power. Hiding behind appearances which mask its real nature, disciplinary power departs from state conceptions of power.

Why should individuals not recognize that they are being redefined and disciplined? Gandhi thinks that much of the answer comes with the way discipline is often tied to necessity, that is, to the economy. Necessity not only has to do with the ways households meet their elementary needs in order to survive biologically, but today they have greatly multiplied to include all manner of things that are considered needs in a commodified society.<sup>37</sup> Gandhi holds that with modernity, needs expand all over the place, and it is impossible to satisfy all of them. The explosion of needs stems from the burgeoning of the materialistic character of modernity which ties identity to a consumption that is never satiated.<sup>38</sup>

It is not the case that the privileged classes discipline other classes but are not disciplined themselves. Gandhi holds that those most likely to be disciplined by modernity are those in the modern sectors, accepting the claims of modernity about its humanitarian impulses, its commitment to rationality, its debts to science, and its promise of progress. Those who have been or seek to be integrated in the modern sector find their success depends on their "self-discipline." The "self-discipline" Gandhi has in mind concerns the ways persons redefine themselves to accommodate to modern norms in order to take advantage of as much of the material and status advantages that the modern age offers.<sup>39</sup> Among the Indians Gandhi targets as falling victim to modern discipline are those who are attempting to insert themselves into the modern sector, such as lawyers in British courts.<sup>40</sup> Ironically, those outside the orbit of modernity often escape many of its pressures of normalization, but they frequently fall under its coercive power.

Surely, the question can be asked whether modern society is more disciplinary than other societies. Probably not, but modern discipline takes place within the context of freedom. The things we want are seen as free expressions on our part. But are they? Gandhi believes that ideas of modern freedom often cloud an understanding of how people are being disciplined and shaped. For him, the order imposed in modern society comes not primarily from the state but from the disciplinary practices that are scattered throughout modern society and that spawn a fatalism that tell us the best we can do is to adapt

and adjust. Such a world has no patience for a challenging, nonviolent politics.

## Conclusions

Gandhi emboldened people with his invitation to practice satyagraha in the face of injustice. Why do not more people take a first step, that is, to protest matters that are amiss? Are they frightened of the consequences? Are they apathetic? Are they fatalistic, believing that things cannot be otherwise? This article looks at fatalism and how it traps nonviolent, purposeful action. The article pays particular attention to the ways that many of the variants of modernity tell us what is natural, good and possible and makes challenge and nonviolent action seem to be beside the point, fated to fail.

Gandhi wants to open eyes. He wants to disturb the sleep of complacency and he aims to have people question what is happening to them rather than merely accept it. He also wants people to decide that matters are not hopeless if only they will act on their own convictions. But for this to happen, they must think seriously for themselves. They can no longer be captives of manipulation or prisoners of fatalism. But this is no easy task. It is not only about overcoming fear but also about challenging the entrenched power of the day as well as the orthodoxy of the time that tells us that this is the way the world turns and that some things are beyond our control or direction. Gandhi wants people to free themselves from the chains of fatalism. Those who accept the inevitability and naturalness of any grand narrative, including modernity, will not engage in direct challenges to ensconced power. For this reason, Gandhi wants people to be skeptical of the claims of grand narratives.

## Notes and References

1. For a further discussion of Gandhi's views of autonomy, see Ronald Terchek, *Gandhi: Struggling for Autonomy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).
2. One of his primary complaints with modernity is that it judges not only the world but itself by its own internally generated standards. For Gandhi, any practice must do more than show it is good or efficient by its own lights.
3. *Hind Swaraj*, ch. 17, p. 92. The edition cited here is *Hind Swaraj* edited by Anthony Parel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
4. See *Hind Swaraj*, ch. 13, p. 71. For a further discussion of Gandhi's selective reliance on modern concepts, see Terchek, *Gandhi*:

- Struggling for Autonomy*, chs. 2 and 3; Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1989); Anthony Parel, "Introduction" in *Hind Swaraj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Mahendra Kumar, "Gandhi in the 21st Century" in *Gandhi and the Contemporary World* edited by Anthony Copley and George Paxton (Chennai: Indo-British Historical Society, 1997); and Thomas Panthan, "Gandhi, Nehru, and Modernity" in *Crisis and Change in Contemporary India* edited by Upendra Baxi and Bhikhu Parekh (New Delhi: Sage, 1995).
5. See *Constructive Programme* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1941).
  6. For Gandhi's discussion of his idealized village as a minicosmos, see *India of My Dreams* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1959) and *Rebuilding Our Villages* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1952).
  7. *Hind Swaraj*, ch. 5, p. 33.
  8. Any way of looking at the world is incomplete. Certain matters are emphasized and others are ignored, but what is ignored can be injustice, cruelty, domination, and humiliation. These missing pieces I call remainders, and Gandhi is particularly concerned about what is left out of the stories that grand narratives tell us about what is natural, good and possible. For a further discussion of remainders, see my *Gandhi: Struggling for Autonomy*, pp. 12-15 and 127-129.
  9. *Hind Swaraj*, ch. 14, p. 73.
  10. Bhikhu Parekh argues that the British claim that India cannot become civilized by itself and needs to be taught. Parekh sees the British presenting themselves (and being accepted by many Indians) as schoolmasters who know better than the students and will teach them the correct way. Imbedded in this view of superiority is an argument Gandhi constantly rejected, namely that a single answer or solution can describe what is best for everyone. Moreover, he recoiled at the idea that Indians must jettison the worthwhile parts of their traditions. He feared that British were trying to introduce comprehensive changes that require new conceptions of culture, morality, law, politics, the economy, and the self. (Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 12.
  11. *Hind Swaraj*, ch. 8, p. 43.
  12. *Young India*, March 21, 1928.
  13. *Hind Swaraj*, chs. 9, 11, 12, and 19 and pp. 164-79. But Gandhi continually makes it clear that he is not opposed to everything modern. Regarding machinery, he says that he rejects it when it ceases "to help the individual and encroaches upon his individuality" (*Young India*, November 20, 1924).
  14. See *Hind Swaraj* ch. 3, p. 24 on the need to be discontented.
  15. On Gandhi's views linking science and ethics, see "Ethical

- Religion" in Raghavan N. Iyer, *Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), vol. 2, pp. 51-52.
16. See *Hind Swaraj*, ch. 12 and Parel's notes in this chapter.
  17. Letter to H. S. L. Polak, October 14, 1909 in Iyer, *Writings*, vol. 1, p. 293.
  18. *The Hindu*, March 19, 1925 in Iyer, *Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 310-311. Here and elsewhere, Gandhi shows that he carries his own appreciation of modernity of a certain sort.
  19. *The Hindu*, March. 19, 1925 in Iyer, *Writings*, vol. 1, p. 312.
  20. *Young India*, November 13, 1924.
  21. See *Young India*, August 25, 1920 and *Harijan*, July 21, 1940 for examples of defying fate.
  22. *Hind Swaraj*, p. 24.
  23. Gandhi's critique of modernity cannot be understood apart from his critique of tradition. He is no nostalgic communitarian who seeks relief from the present by escaping into the past. As he understands matters, domination is no exclusive characteristic of either the past or the present and needs to be exposed and resisted whenever it asserts itself.
  24. According to Gandhi, sacred texts "suffer from a process of double distillation. Firstly, they come through a human prophet, and then commentaries of interpreters. Nothing in them comes from God directly" (*Harijan*, December 5, 1936).
  25. See Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 46-50, 53-61, and 65-71. Also see Yogesh Chadha, *Gandhi: A Life* (New York, John Wiley, 1997), pp. 218-225.
  26. "Talks to Ashram Women," 1926 in Iyer, *Writings*, vol. 3, p. 394.
  27. See *Harijan*, February 24, 1940 in Iyer, *Writings*, vol. 3, p. 394.
  28. *Harijan*, April 20, 1934.
  29. Gandhi, *From Yeravda Mandir*, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1935), p. 47. As Gandhi understands matters, "untouchability... is a weedy growth fit only to be weeded out. If I again interpret the Hindu spirit rightly, all life is absolutely equal and one" (*Young India*, October 20, 1927).
  30. See his advice to women that they must be in charge of their own emancipation in "Talks to Ashram Women," 1926 in Iyer, *Writings*, vol. 3, p. 394.
  31. *All Men Are Brothers*, edited by Krishna Kripalani (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 72-73.
  32. He reports that "After long study and experience, I have come to the conclusion that (1) all religions are true; (2) all religions have some error in them" (*All Men Are Brothers*, edited by Krishna Kripalani, p. 60).
  33. When some talk about power and Gandhi, they discuss his theory of the power of love. Here, I want to take up another aspect of power



- in his writings. I do not mean to discount the importance of love in Gandhi's conceptualization of power. I take this matter up in *Gandhi: Struggling for Autonomy* (pp. 144-46). See also Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy* and Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence*.
34. See *Hind Swaraj* ch. 19, p. 198.
  35. *Young India*, May 23, 1920.
  36. Gandhi regards the rise of the nation state and its accompanying bureaucracy as a threat to the well-being of the periphery. For a further discussion of Gandhian politics, see Ronald Terchek, "Gandhi's Democratic Theory," *Political Thought of Modern India* edited by Thomas Pantham and Kenneth Deutsch (New Delhi: Sage, 1986).
  37. Gandhi holds that modernity feeds on the proclivity of the biological nature of human beings always to crave more. On his account, "The mind is a restless bird; the more it gets the more it wants and still remains unsatisfied. The more we indulge our passions the more unbridled they become" (*Hind Swaraj*, ch. 13).
  38. He finds that "The distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization is an infinite multiplicity of human wants" (*Young India*, June 2, 1927).
  39. He complains that the British "spend their days in luxury or in making a bare living and retire at night thoroughly exhausted. In this state of affairs, I cannot understand when they can" transcend their worlds of consumption and work (*Collected Works*, IX, p. 389).
  40. See *Hind Swaraj*, ch. 11.

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# Indian Environmentalism and Gandhian Values: The Relevance of Satyagraha in Contemporary Environmental Movements in India

*Sarmistha Pattanaik*

## Introduction

Environmentalism in India, like in most parts of South Asia, began mainly as an integral part of local level activism for broad social justice. The spontaneous resistance and protests by the affected parties, when and where the lives or livelihoods of a number of people or communities were threatened by the environmental impacts of activities initiated by others, came to be identified as 'environmentalism'.<sup>1</sup> The beginnings of the environmental movement in India are conventionally dated to the early 1970s. Beginning with the Chipko movement in the Garhwal Himalayas in the 1970s and reaching global prominence with the movement against the Narmada dams in the next two decades, India has witnessed a series of popular movements in defense of community rights to natural resources. In many of these movements of the present time, environmental activists have relied heavily on Gandhian techniques of non-violent protest or satyagraha, and have drawn abundantly on Gandhian polemic against heavy industrialization. Gandhi has been the commonly acknowledged patron saint of the Indian environmental movement. He was the principal architect of India's independence and nationalism and set

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his head and heart to stop the blatant exploitation of India's people and its natural resources.

### *Gandhi and Ecology*

Ideas of environmental consciousness, ecological understanding, environmental conservation, sustainability and survival are very much found in Gandhi's philosophy, teachings and ideology. Much before the environmental consciousness began to expand in modern times, Gandhi had brought out a manifesto of counter culture in his '*Hind Swaraj*' or '*Indian Home Rule*' in 1909.<sup>2</sup> His *Hind Swaraj* is a manifesto warning against the mad race after civilization or modernization characterized by materialism and a distorted model of development. Today, environmental hazards pose a greater danger to our survival than even the nuclear stockpile. The Stockholm conference in 1972 had proclaimed that "the protection of the environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of people and economic development throughout the World". It is, therefore, here that the teachings of the Mahatma become increasingly meaningful and relevant. The present paper tries to explore the Gandhian values and principles of non-violence or '*Satyagraha*' in relation to nature. "Nature is to be approached with a sense of reverence" according to Gandhi. In fact, Gandhi has not said anything specific on environmental degradation and alternative solutions although it had become a problem even during his period. For instance, he himself was never associated with forest satyagrahas, but his name was frequently invoked by peasants and rebels. We can find the ways and solutions in his writings, his speeches and his life. Once, when asked for a message to humanity, Gandhi said, "*My life is my message*".

Gandhi was a practising yogi, although he never claimed to be so. The various formal disciplines like *yamas* and *niyamas* pertain to environment and ethics or resource use. In fact, these were actually first practised and then preached by the Mahatma. The *yamas* are ethical commandments relating to human behaviour in relation to other humans and living creatures and non-living resources. Essentially, these are a set of don'ts; the five *yamas* are: non-violence (*ahimsa*) towards all animate and in-animate creation, truth (*satya*), shunning the use of materials obtained by illegitimate means and avoiding destruction and vandalism (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahmacharya*) because humans need to keep their numbers in check, otherwise demand on resources will increase, and lastly, not coveting or amassing materials and wealth beyond one's requirement (*aparigraha*). Gandhi practised all the *yamas*, encouraged indigenous capability and local self-reliance (*swadeshi*), self-rule and local self-governance (*swaraj*)

at the level of village and welfare of the weakest (antyodaya) leading to welfare of all (sarvodaya). It is said that 'if environment is to be saved from degradation we have to avoid or limit the use of machinery'. That is why Gandhi's promotion of khadi and village industries has become more relevant today than during the freedom struggle.

A Gandhian ecology, therefore, begins with individual and collective self-rule (*swaraj*), premised upon truth, non-violence and self-sacrificial actions or (*tapas*). It insists upon respect and compassion for all creatures and for nature itself. It encourages economic self-reliance and self-sufficiency at the local (village, town, or neighborhood) level. Gandhian ecology addresses the practical environmental and economic issues of our present day grounded in ultimate values and truth-seeking.<sup>3</sup>

#### *The organizing legacy of Mahatma Gandhi—Satyagraha*

After Gautam Buddha, Gandhi has been the prophet of non-violence and truth - sticking to the truth (satyagraha) even under greatest provocation. He has been acknowledged as an unquestioned apostle of applied human ecology. Gandhi argued that no one could know with certainty the absolute truth, and that without such certainty, we could not presume to punish our opponent by using violence. Self-suffering, another important element of Satyagraha, guarantees the sincerity of the satyagrahi's own opinions, and restraints the person from asserting ambiguous truths.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi believed that there is divinity in all life, and a fundamental unity in divinity. His faith in non-violence and vegetarianism made him a votary of conservation of all diversity including all forms of life, societies, cultures and religions. His argument for conservation of biodiversity was indeed simple. Since a "human being has no power to create life, he has, therefore no right to destroy life". Further, he felt that there cannot be any ecological movement designed to prevent violence against nature unless the principle of non-violence becomes central to the ethos of human nature. Hence, the centrality of Gandhi in non-violent activism is widely acknowledged and has been important source of inspiration for contemporary environmental movements in India. In other words, the environmentalism in India in the form of Satyagraha very closely mirrors elements of Gandhi's philosophy. His entire life and work is an environmental legacy for all humanity. Gandhi's environmentalism amounts to being pro-nature, pro-poor, pro-women and pro-job generation. He combined social, economic, environmental, equity and ethical imperatives for obtaining political independence and economic salvation through rural

development for the teeming millions of India. In 1920, in *Young India*, he wrote: "We want to organize our national power not by adopting the best methods of production only, but by the best method of both the production and distribution".<sup>5</sup>

Hence, the important elements of Gandhian environmentalism are:

- ✓ Human beings should act in a manner so as to reinforce its identity as a part of nature rather than severing connections with nature;
- ✓ Materials available on the earth should not be used with greed;
- ✓ Human beings practice non-violence not only towards fellow humans but also towards other living organisms and inanimate materials because over-use of such materials also amounts to violence;
- ✓ Bottom-up shared value is preferred to the top-down totalitarian overview;
- ✓ Conservationist and sustainable life-saving approach prevails over the unsustainable consumerist self-destructive approach;
- ✓ The human race thinks about how much is enough for a simple need-based, austere and comfortable life style;
- ✓ Human care for and share with the poor and the destitute in the society is a moral obligation towards them;
- ✓ All development as far as possible should lead to local self-reliance and equity with social justice;
- ✓ Ethics and self-discipline in resource use is an over-riding criterion of development.<sup>6</sup>

This paper analyses the teachings and ideals of Mahatma which have a tremendous impact upon various environmental movements of contemporary India, its present relevance and significance in the twentieth and twenty-first century and argues that those who want to make an informed study of 'social movements' or 'environmental movements' with livelihood issues, protecting our biodiversity and people's rights to natural resources and particularly those who are interested in the philosophy of non-violence and satyagraha for the success of the movement, should, therefore, go back to Gandhi for a fuller picture. Drawing insights from three contemporary popular environmental movements in India- Chipko, NBA (Narmada Bachao Andolan), and CBA (Chilika Bachao Andolan) of the present time, this essay tries to explore the influences of Gandhian values and principles upon the movement's better known figures popularly known as Gandhian activists and who have underlined their own debt to Gandhi in these movements. The paper seeks answer to various questions: Does the life and practice of Gandhi have been the single most important influence on the Indian environmental movements?

Can his teachings, his work give us an 'alternative perspective' on development while explaining how 'the current mode of development is exploitative of man by man and of nature by man'? In fact, what is the relevance of Gandhi today in the present day environmental crisis? To find answer to these questions we need to revisit the environmental movements in India and locate the role of satyagraha in it.

### **Environmentalism in India and Philosophy of Satyagraha**

There are critics about whether Gandhi could be considered an 'early environmentalist'.<sup>7</sup> Ramachandra Guha, one of the foremost scholars of environmentalism in India and abroad, argued that although Gandhi anticipated our environmental concerns, but did not demonstrate practically where and in what ways he did so.<sup>8</sup> He also showed his disagreement on Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj* (published in 1909) by critically arguing that "although the book gives an 'alternative perspective' on development while explaining how the current mode of development is exploitative of man by man and of nature by man, the book does not say anything about man's relationship with nature and hence, offers less to an alternative perspective in development".<sup>9</sup> However, inspite of noting down certain limitations in viewing Gandhi as an 'early environmentalist' for his purportedly poor recognition of the distinctive social and environmental problems of urban areas, Guha readily acknowledges that the value and philosophy of Gandhian thinking is to be felt in the life and works of many of India's most well-known environmental activists in various environmental movements.

Madhav Gadgil, the pioneering environmental writer in India, says that "the origins of Indian environmentalism lie in the early 1970s, when a number of movements and events heralded a new awareness". The philosophical moorings of early Indian environmentalism were largely Gandhian. But, prior to 1970s, there were also few thinkers who worked with the tradition of Gandhi for a 'village-centered economic order', of which resource conservation was an integral part. It was J.C. Kumarappa, who studied the agrarian economy with a view to rehabilitating it on sound social and 'ecological principles'. The environmental implications of his work could be better highlighted through his writings where his observation about profound ecological consequences could be sought. He asserted, "if we produce everything we want from within a limited area, we are in a position to supervise the methods of production; while if we draw our requirements from the ends of the earth it becomes impossible for us to guarantee the conditions of production in such places".<sup>10</sup> As a follower of Gandhi he went on to challenge the modern civilization for disembedding

the economy from its ethical and cultural moorings.

Kumarappa could be said to be the first Gandhian who began the task of building an ecological programme on Gandhian lines much before the initiation and popularization of environmentalism in India. After Kumarappa's work the Gandhian values and principles of ecology are more visible and observed in various environmental movements in the 1970s starting with the Chipko movement in the Garhwal Himalayas.

Another Gandhian with environmental ideas was Mira Behn (originally known as Madeline Slade), the daughter of an English admiral who joined Mahatma's sabarmati ashram in 1925. During her stay in rural north India, she made some perceptive comments on the environmental problems of Indian agriculture, i.e., the large scale water logging that appears to be an almost inescapable feature of canal irrigation, the ploughing up of lands more suitable for growing pasture for cattle and rampant soil erosion. Like Kumarappa her primary concern was with the rehabilitation of the village economy of India, but her interest in the natural environment was not merely instrumental; at times, she expressed a spiritual affinity with nature of a Wordsworthian kind, similar to the European romantic tradition. Herself a 'devotee of the great primeval Mother Earth', she wrote in April 1949 that:

the tragedy today is that educated and moneyed classes are altogether out of touch with the vital fundamentals of existence—our Mother Earth, and the animal and vegetable population which she sustains.....we have got to study Nature's balance, and develop our lives within her laws, if we are to survive as a physically healthy and morally decent species.<sup>11</sup>

### **Revisiting Chipko, NBA and CBA: Experiments with Satyagraha**

#### *The Chipko Movement*

The Chipko movement is historically, philosophically and organizationally an extension of the traditional Gandhian Satyagraha. It is India's first celebrated environmental struggle. Started in the early 1970s, its roots lie more strongly in a century-old tradition of peasant resistance in defence of forest rights. The movement was the result of hundreds of decentralized and locally autonomous initiatives. It pitted hill villagers against state forestry policies that gave priority to commercial exploitation over subsistence use. The Forest Department's replacement of the mixed deciduous forests with pine plantations in the Garhwal region undermined an economy where forests provided fuel, fodder, timber and many other basic

requirements. Protest in the hills was marked by large-scale involvement of women and peasants. The campaign to manage forests for guaranteeing subsistence usufruct acquired an explicitly ecological dimension after the devastating floods of 1970, which brought into public consciousness the links between deforestation, social erosion, floods and landslides. A key element in Chipko ideology since then was opposition to commercial tree felling on both ecological and social grounds.<sup>12</sup> The movement's better-known figures were Sri Dev Suman, Mira Behn and Sarala Behn—regarded as true Gandhians. The influence of these two European disciples of Gandhi—Mira Behn and Sarla Behn, on the heritage of Chipko struggle for social justice and ecological stability in the hills of Uttar Pradesh has been immense and they generated a new brand of Gandhian activists who provided the foundation for the Chipko movement—Sunderlal Bahuguna and Chandi Prasad Bhatt. These two Gandhians have been regarded as the extraordinary Gandhian environmentalists of the present day<sup>13</sup>.

Bhatt and his organization the 'Dashauli Gram Swarajya Mandal' (DGSM), became the main organizing base of the Chipko movement. The tree-hugging technique of protest was itself suggested by Bhatt to the peasants of the Upper Alkananda valley. In referring to the Chipko's crusade to protect the region of Uttarakhand from ecological abuse, Chandi Prasad said:

Our movement goes beyond the erosion of land, to the erosion of human values.... The centre of all of this is humankind. If we are not in a good relationship with the environment, the environment will be destroyed, and we will lose our ground. But, if you halt the erosion of humankind, humankind will halt the erosion of the soil.<sup>14</sup>

Such was the philosophy of Chandi Prasad's Chipko movement, which draws its inspiration from 'Gandhian Sarvodaya (good or welfare of all) teachings and practices.

In a similar manner, where Chandi Prasad Bhatt has been reckoned as the pioneer of Chipko, another movement's ideological and charismatic saintly figure has been Sunderlal Bahuguna, who has spread the Chipko message in India and abroad through his tireless *padayatras* (long marches) across the Himalayas, fasts, lectures and writings. His indefinite fast in 1981 demanding a total ban on commercial felling above an altitude of 1,000 metres was a major success for the movement based on the Gandhian principle of satyagraha. It was in response to this event that the government imposed a fifteen-year moratorium on commercial forestry in the region. Thus, the Chipko movement was an example of how non-violent resistance and struggle by thousands of people at the



grassroots can succeed under certain circumstances. It is, in fact, a voice from the margins of Indian civil society that managed to demonstrate that crucial environmental conflicts are not just city-based (such as pollution) or related to the depletion of non-renewable resources useful for industry, but arise directly from the philosophical premises embedded in the modern western and capitalist vision.<sup>15</sup>

Gandhian values and principles of ecology animate the lives of both the leaders of the Chipko movement who are also the greatest living Indians in Guha's terminology. Bahuguna is a prophet and moralist who appeals to the conscience of individuals, urging them to abjure consumerism and return to a simpler way of life. In contrast, Bhatt and his groups are more in line with Gandhi who emphasized constructive work by training activists in his Sabarmati and Wardha ashrams since he believes in a 'sustainable economic alternative' to centralized development. His work has helped to infuse a new ecological meaning to the Mahatma's ideal of 'Gram Swaraj' or village self-reliance.

*The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA):*

A second successful example of environmental campaign which has succeeded Chipko as the most significant environmental initiative in India today is the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan', the campaign for the stopping of the Narmada Valley Project (NVP), a huge hydro-electric dam and irrigation project. The movement has tried to pressure the Indian government and foreign investors to stop construction of dams that submerge huge sections of the valley and displace hundreds of thousands of people. It has won some victories too, most notably in 1993 when the World Bank expressed concern about human rights problems and withdrew its funding. But the Indian Supreme Court, which at one point, had stayed construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, ruled in October 2000 that the project could go forward. Beyond several specifics of these projects, the NBA has challenged the reigning 'development paradigm', the very idea that these large-scale projects are always beneficial to ordinary people. Observes Amita Baviskar, "the very attempts of the administrative mechanism through the elites to exploit the resources have been challenged and collectively resisted by the very people whom India had 'sought to marginalize'".<sup>16</sup>

The movement's charismatic figures – Medha Patkar and Baba Amte – regarded as eminent Gandhian activists, have been fighting in a non-violent manner over the past two decades. Medha Patkar, a social scientist, environmentalist and human rights activist, who has lived among the tribals of the Narmada valley since the mid 1980s, played a crucial role in starting the Gandhian satyagraha which, for

the past two decades, has resisted the destruction of rural villages and the displacement of traditionally poor and underprivileged tribals by the state and its allies such as the global financial institutions and accompanying corporate interests. During an interview with Robert Jensen, she argued that "while such projects generate large profits for a small number of people, they also bring social and environmental devastation to those who are in the way of progress".<sup>17</sup> She focused on the threat to "the very life-supported resources of the world" posed by corporations and the so-called 'free market' of the neo-liberal economic programme, which bring "displacement, destruction and disparity". She linked the goals of the movement to challenge corporate globalization to the longstanding struggles of the adivasi (indigenous or tribal) people and dalits in India to control their own lives by saying "without community rights, no human rights can be sustained in the face of corporatization, criminalization, communalism and corruption".

The movement's another saintly figure, a veteran social activist, Baba Amte is a living legend and a shining example of the Gandhian spirit and approach to current and compelling social problems of Narmada struggle. Amte is regarded as the first man in post-independence India who has so passionately carried forward the Gandhian movement for swaraj in the country. During July 2001, he had launched a mass Narmada satyagraha or non-violent resistance against the Sardar Sarover Project, against inhuman displacement and unjust development. His message was "satyagrahis should stake their lives and assert people's right to life and resources".

As a tireless social activist, he has been propagating his ideas among the common people, especially among the youth of the country. He described the 'Narmada Satyagraha' as a new battle front for youth action in independent India, and therefore, said "it was an outburst of Gandhian courage and concern for antyodaya". Further, Amte said poignantly, "now that the sun of life is about to set I have set out to catch the rising sun of environmental consciousness".<sup>18</sup>

Thus, in our present developmental efforts, India and the world have to willingly come to terms with the ideas of Baba Amte as a true satyagrahi fighting for the cause of the common people.

Finally, I round off my discussion on the 'Gandhian satyagraha' by citing recent environmental movements in eastern India, popularly known as 'Chilika Bachao Andolan' (CBA) or 'Save Chilika Movement'. Chipko and Narmada movements are outstanding examples of Gandhian satyagraha, but they are by no means isolated examples of the living heritage of Gandhi. The CBA also represents Gandhi-like spirit and ideology and is a most significant icon of contemporary

environmental struggles of in India.

*Chilika Bachao Andolan (CBA):*

The ongoing struggle of the fisher-folk of Chilika lake in recent years in Orissa is an example of environmental protest by the local, traditional, cultural fishing communities against the development policy of the state and also one of the successful movements based on the line of Gandhian principle of satyagraha. The initiative in the movement was carried out by the local traditional fishermen communities in the early part of nineties against the commercial shrimp aquaculture projects promoted by the state and outside capitalist interests. The movement was successful in campaigning against the state government's lease of large parts of Chilika lake to the Tatas, one of India's biggest industrial conglomerates.

Chilika lake, a lake of about five thousand years old situated in the east coast of peninsular India, in the Bay of Bengal, is one of the popular Ramsar sites in Asia. It is the biggest brackish water lake. Fishery resources of Chilika lake are one of the most potential sources of income for the local people and for the government of Orissa through export and inland supplies. The lake and its ecosystem have a cultural location and cultural significance in the life of the fishermen community.

When the Tata group started intensive shrimp culture inside the lake, along with a tie-up programme with the Government of Orissa, it ignored the interest and requirement of the marginalized class, i.e., the traditional fishermen community of Chilika. When their livelihood became threatened by the move of the agencies by taking lease over the surrounding areas of the natural resources, the outcome was obviously violent protest and resistance. In the wake of all these developments, a powerful people's movement emerged in Chilika in the name of Chilika Bachao Andolan (CBA) or 'Save Chilika Movement' to protect the lake economy as well as its people from the commercial exploitation by big businessmen and to restore people's right to manage the lake.<sup>19</sup>

There are mainly three strata of social forces operating in Chilika contributing to the emergence of this protest movement. They are the traditional fishermen, farmers and students. Among them the fishermen and the farmers are directly affected either by the Tatas or the mafia's invasion on Chilika. Students group are an extraneous force, but deeply involved in the Chilika's struggle. The traditional fishing communities, however, were the people who are deeply concerned with the destruction of both their livelihood and also that of Chilika which are in a way complementary to each other. The traditional fishing communities and farmers were mobilized through

the support of the 'Orissa Krushak Mahasangha' (Orissa Farmer's Federation) or O.K.M. a farmer's organization under the leadership of late. Shri Banka Behary Das, a veteran of Quit India movement and president of the then federation. In fact, of the diverse ideological streams comprising the Chilika people's movement, the most well-known name is that of B.B. Das, a leading Gandhian activist of the movement whose leadership and mobilization was singularly important. He had spread the movement's message all over India and abroad.

The O.K.M. under the leadership of B.B. Das gave a new dimension to Chilika's struggle in 1992 by raising the question of ecological health of the Lake along with the impairment of livelihoods. Mr. Das led the case of Chilika to the Supreme Court by invoking the C.R.Z. Notification (under CRZ notification, prawn culture ponds are either in the prohibited zone between High Tide line and Low Tide line or within 500 metres of the High Tide line for which prior permission is needed. The Central Government had no policy about coastal prawn culture till recently and the State Government of Orissa did not enforce the existing laws till the early part of 1995.<sup>20</sup> While opposing the aquaculture bill he emphasized that, "the real roots of the Indian constitution, which are grounded in social justice and popular participation, necessitate the preservation of environment and people's livelihood".<sup>21</sup>

By invoking the CRZ notification and raising the question of environment Das broadened the campaign base of CBA in Orissa and elsewhere in the country. The O.K.M. with the help of 'Chilika Matshyajivi Mahasangha' (Chilika Fishermen's Association) mobilized the fisher-folk and organized big rallies and *Dharnas* at Chhatrapur, the district headquarters of Ganjam.<sup>22</sup> By this, all the villages surrounding Chilika were involved and it also attracted people outside the lake area. The result was that the movement became broad-based and powerful. With the help of O.K.M., the movement continued the environmental awareness programmes, meetings and conventions. Emphasis was being given on cultural programmes including 'street drama' and 'folk drama' to arouse awareness among fisher-folk. The movement in its second phase of its struggle had given a call for '*Rasta Roko*' and '*Rail Roko*' on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1994 in order to force the government to evict the encroachers. '*Dharnas*, *padayatras* and *demonstrations* were the means through which it used to create awareness among the people and attract the attention of the government to understand their plight. This was the beauty of the peaceful movement run on Gandhian principles as expressed by late B.B.Das.<sup>23</sup>

### Lessons from Satyagraha in Environmentalism: Organizing for Activism

In analyzing Indian environmentalism through satyagraha, my analysis suggests that Gandhism, the dominant strand in Indian environmentalism of today, is grounded in a moral imperative. In other words, many of the methods by which communities have resisted environmental degradation and external control of natural resources fall under the rubric of satyagraha (truth force or non-violent resistance).<sup>24</sup> The ways in which satyagrahis deal with different forms or means of protest are strongly integrated into a broader, more holistic approach, which helps the groups to build and create broader environmental or social movements.

Among the various methods used by activists and groups resisting environmental degradation (as witnessed in our earlier discussion), six are easily discernible. First comes the *pradarshan*, a collective show of strength by communities at the receiving end of environmental degradation, be they peasants of Chipko or fisher-folk of Chilika protesting against the pawn aquaculture project. The *pradarshan* shades imperatively into a more militant form of protest called as *dharna* or sit-in which aims specifically at stopping economic activities that threaten the survival options of resource dependent communities. Further, a more sharply focused variant of the *dharna* is *gherao*, where a senior bureaucrat or politician perhaps is surrounded by protestors and locked till he accedes to their demands or is rescued by the police. More militant still is the *rasta roko* which was born out of a more general disgust with state policy as could be found in the case of NBA and CBA. Fifth, we have the resurrection of a classic technique of Gandhian satyagraha used and applied by our activists in environmental movements—the *jail bharo andolan* (literally means the movement to fill the jails). Here, protestors deliberately court arrest by violating a law, most frequently section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC), used to prohibit large gatherings. At the same time, the inadequacy of Indian jails to handle large numbers of prisoners assures them a relatively swift release. And, finally, the sixth technique of Gandhian satyagraha is the *bhook hartal* or hunger strike. In fact, the *bhook hartal* is most frequently carried out in the presence of a charismatic figure such as Baba Amte, Medha Patkar and Sunderlal Bahuguna. In fact, the fast unto death by a widely respected popular leader is a coercive technique to compel the state to yield in fear of the consequences of the leader succumbing to the fast. Above all, the Narmada movement has already witnessed a major *Sangharse Yatra* (struggle march), while its participants have frequently threatened a

spectacular *Jal Samadhi* (literally, water burial through immersion in the rising waters).

The various environmental movements drawn on the above mentioned means of *satyagraha* provide, perhaps, the best insight into the structural dimension of Gandhian ecology: its steadfast adherence to a non-violent and self-reliant ecological philosophy. The Chipko movement, NBA and CBA—all stress a harmonious and sustainable relation between humans and nature. Second, the Chipko movement encourages local control of basic modes of economic production and recommends village-based industries, since Gandhi identified India's villages as the locus for political, economic and personal *swaraj* or self rule. Here, the inner logic of Gandhian ecology emerges since *swaraj* is understood in the context of *satya*, *ahimsa* and *tapas* – the inner logic of non-violent living. Third, the leaders of these movements urge a non-violent respect and compassionate concern for those persons and institutions that threaten local self-rule, self-sufficiency (*swadeshi*) and control of natural resources.

This non-violent, self sufficient village life is an antidote to the 'brutal force' of capitalism and is a precondition for any form of national, political or economic self-rule as propagated by Gandhi. However, inspite of all these ideals, philosophy, teachings and morals, Gandhian non-violent views are also not free of critics. Some criticize his views as too idealistic. Critics raise the question as to whether Gandhi or his philosophy of *satyagraha* provide all the answers to those working for environmental and social renewal today? These eternal values ran like a fine chain through all his (Gandhi's) ideas, actions, experiments and ideals. Although there are certain limitations to the Gandhian approach such as inadequate understanding of the urban context and its distinctive social and environmental problems and the wilderness.<sup>25</sup> Still, for many, he is a great contributor to the environmental resistance movements aimed at the restoration of the relationship between the agrarian economy and its natural environment. Therefore, the environmental movements must perennially return to Mahatma Gandhi. It is important today for Gandhian activists, people and decision-makers to take a serious stock of the situation and reallocate their priorities for a better and healthy environment. As Gandhi says, "the earth provides enough for every man's need, but not for every man's greed", has proved to be true in today's fast growing culture throughout the World. The land of the Mahatma has also got trapped in the same trend. Therefore, if India is to be saved from the unabated environmental pollution, the process of consumerism should be reversed before it is too late.

Above all, the sarvodaya based values of truth, non-violence and goals of Gandhian model of development offer a grand non-violent revolutionary strategy for the reconstruction of humanity.

To conclude, my analysis suggests that rather than critically examining Gandhi's ideology and philosophy, it is the hour of need to emphasize the importance and significance of his principle of satyagraha which offers a grand non-violent revolutionary strategy for the reconstruction of humanity. In order to protect our environment and to obtain sustainable development, the Gandhian satyagraha is the only means. In other words, a wider Gandhian satyagraha for our environment and its conservation is a viable force for resisting globalization and consumerism in India and for promoting social and ecological justice worldwide. Gandhian ecology is one that engages environmental issues on a practical level through non-violent means as a way to find ultimately peaceful and sustainable solutions. The eco-system of a Gandhian model is based on the ecological values of harmony between its four major components, namely population, organization, energy and technology. Hence, the harmony will be established through decentralized, handicraft-based, community oriented production system which promotes the values of dignity of labour and bread labour—thus giving an opportunity for individuals to be in direct contact with nature and environment.

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# Gandhi's Way

Paul E. Wehr

## Introduction

SATYAGRAHA INVOLVED A complex of strategy and tactics developed by Gandhi to mobilize his followers for a campaign and to manage their energy for the conflict. Some of these elements were articulated and openly explained by Gandhi in his writing and his work with other movement leaders. Others have been postulated by observers such as this author in their effort to understand and broaden Gandhi's legacy for students of social movements.

Of particular interest for me has been the character of satyagraha as a strategy of self-limiting conflict.<sup>1</sup> That concept emerged from a research project I undertook in India in the 1970s sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. At that time, several of Gandhi's close associates were still living and I was able to interview them about the nature of satyagraha. It was moving indeed to hear the personal observations of Vinoba Bhave, Kakasaheb Kalelkar and J.B. Kripalani on how and why Gandhi managed conflict so well.

A satyagraha campaign was, for Gandhi, a search for social truth. As Bondurant has characterized it in her concept, the "Gandhian dialectic," the particular social condition of non-truth a campaign sought to change was the *thesis*. The movement of protest and reform was the *antithesis*. Through nonviolent action, a more truthful *synthesis* of human needs and rights would emerge.<sup>2</sup> But such a dialectical process involves intense conflict and potentially great harm to all the conflict parties, so harmful that truth might be all but obliterated. The dilemma for every social change movement is how to achieve its goal without corrupting or destroying it in the process. Just how did Gandhi solve this dilemma?

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### Gandhi and Conflict Control

The factors which render intense social conflict so difficult to manage have been carefully studied by social theorists. James Coleman identified several dynamics he called "runaway processes" that are evident as a community controversy intensifies.<sup>3</sup> As satyagraha was practised, it avoided or minimized each of them.

First, notes Coleman, controversy that begins over a specific issue rapidly grows to express more general discontent, with multiple issues and constituencies being raised. Thus, simpler one-issue disputes are transformed into much more complex and difficult ones. Gandhi avoided such issue proliferation by tying each campaign to a single issue or focus (e.g. wages, land tenure, khadi) and limited successes at truth-finding were sufficient for him, while keeping the larger vision of ultimate peace and justice in sight.

Second, in runaway conflict disagreement over an issue, usually there will emerge antagonistic feeling toward the opponent as conflict intensifies. Emotion eclipses reason. Open communication decreases, negative images of one's opponent build, and the conflict is displaced from the issue onto the opponent's person or group. At the same time, opponents increasingly depersonalize one another, making it ever more easy to hurt, difficult to empathize with. Gandhi resisted that depersonalization tendency by maintaining open communication and friendly relations with leaders of the opposition. After all, in his view, they were joint truth seekers and their alienation would only make truth more elusive.

A third type of change occurring as a conflict develops is the growing distortion of information on all sides. Rumor running through a community is the enemy of reliable information and conflict control. As direct and open exchange among groups and individuals decreases, the information vacuum thus created is filled with inaccurate information and, in some cases, disinformation as opponents seek to confuse one another and gain support from those not yet involved. Faulty information in a conflict situation heightens mistrust and deepens the sense of threat and insecurity on all sides. Secrecy is the enemy of trust and agreement. Gandhi understood this well and made openness a hallmark of his campaigns. Direct communication with opponents, open discussion and revealing of plans and intentions, liberal use of the mass media to explain goals and methods - all served to minimize misunderstanding and suspicion in satyagraha campaigns.

A fourth dynamic characterizing the building of a conflict is what Coleman refers to as *reciprocal causation*. An action by a conflict actor tends to evoke a reaction in kind from an opponent. An angry facial

expression gets the same in response. A threat produces a counter-threat. A blow is answered with a blow. This dynamic is made more problematic by the inherent tendency for the reaction to be more forceful than the action. One sees, therefore, a spiraling escalatory effect and usually runaway, uncontrolled and increasingly damaging conflict.

In Gandhi's civil disobedience campaigns, the satyagrahi's firm commitment to and training in nonviolence (*ahimsa*) would have tended to restrain spiraling escalation. It would have encouraged reciprocal causation to work toward positive ends, with nonviolence evoking similar behavior from the opponent. Still, these campaigns often involved thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands. With such high levels of tension and emotion, Gandhi could not rely solely on moral commitment to keep violence and escalation in check. He appears to have developed what I have termed elsewhere a step-wise procedure by which the conflict could be pursued without violence or loss of rapport with the opponents.<sup>4</sup> Satyagraha campaigns followed a certain sequence of increasingly forceful actions. First, negotiation with opponents. Then, if agreement were not reached: agitation of movement members through speeches and the press; an ultimatum to opponents backed up with a mobilized movement; economic sanctions against opponents; massive non-cooperation (or civil disobedience if breaking the law were necessary); fasting as the ultimate persuasive step. Each action in the sequence, more forceful than the preceding one, heightened the conflict. It was, as is all escalation, filled with uncertainty and risk. This was especially so when high stakes and large numbers of satyagrahis were involved.

To control that risky process with such a possibility of its spiraling away into violence, Gandhi appeared, in this author's view, to structure a campaign as a stairway on which the movement could go either way, up or down. If persuasion of an opponent had not been achieved with, say, economic sanctions, before proceeding to a higher, more forceful level, Gandhi would withdraw with his movement leaders to an ashram or other place of isolation. Time, prayer and meditation, manual labor, strategic and tactical reconsideration...all of these would lead to a decision to take more forceful action or to reopen negotiation with opponents. Such a de-escalation would resemble what contemporary conflict specialists refer to as a "loopback to negotiation." This measured, built-in hiatus in forceful action was effective in limiting the speed of satyagraha campaigns, giving valuable time for wiser decisions and cooling of emotions. Replacing the escalatory spiral with a step-wise progression reflected Gandhi's incremental, measured approach to radical social change.

A final change occurring as conflict intensifies is the displacement of moderate leaders by those with more extreme views and methods. Coleman calls this tendency *Gresham's Law of Conflict*. As members of a community polarize around two or more points of view or affiliation, groups form and leaders emerge whose primary interest is in differentiating and distancing themselves from one another. Extremism lends itself to this interest and radical leaders move their groups increasingly toward force and even violence. Gandhi guarded against this tendency by selecting his leaders very carefully and, as Gene Sharp notes, by training them rigorously in nonviolent principles and practice before each campaign.<sup>5</sup> Whenever possible, he led a campaign personally and his presence would act as restraint. His practice of movement self-reliance whereby alliances with other political forces were eschewed, helped minimize the risk of its being influenced by leaders not committed to nonviolence.

The skill at conflict control reflected in Gandhi's approach was no doubt honed by him over many years of local institution-building in Gujarat State before his energies shifted to the movement for national independence. The inter-communal and trust-based character of those community institutions and voluntary associations created a structure for controlling rumor, violence and the breakdown of ordered life.<sup>6</sup> Gandhi, the visionary, and Sardar Patel, the organizer created over the years a peace system of inter-communal communication and mutual support right across Gujarat which lasted well beyond the traumas of Gandhi's assassination, the creation of Pakistan and the separation in Kashmir. When occasional Hindu-Muslim riots did occur in Ahmedabad, "Instead of spiraling to engulf large parts of the city, they were brought under control by the preexisting networks".<sup>7</sup> In Surat, where inter-communal business-based links were built on trust, the peace system persisted even through the 1990s.<sup>8</sup> For the national independence movement, such local inter-communal links became the enabling structure for Gandhi's conflict control.

### **The Model Disseminated**

Elements of Gandhi's self-limiting conflict approach have been reflected in nonviolent action for social change and national defence in societies throughout the world. His model has been studied, practiced and modified in social settings the range of which he could hardly have imagined. Whenever weaker groups use nonviolent action, there is the ever present risk that violent repression will be used against them. That risk is less so than if they were using violence themselves, probably, but with determined armed opponents, a serious risk nevertheless. So, nonviolent resisters have learned for nearly a

century now to explore and test Gandhi's "experiment with truth."

*Disciplined nonviolence.* Certainly, the use of non-cooperation by oppressed groups has been practised back into antiquity as Gene Sharp has so ably shown.<sup>9</sup> But Gandhi's satyagraha brought it to a new scale and level of effectiveness. With the rapid growth of the mass media in the 1920s and beyond, low power groups learned of the approach and how to use the technique with or without its spiritual basis. A notable example was the United Auto Workers industrial sit-down strike in Detroit in 1937. It might not have been the first workplace occupation ever, but it was probably the first large, extended and well organized one.

In Central America, where US-supported military dictatorships were a tradition by the 1940s, the power of carefully executed mass non-cooperation illustrated in Gandhi's India was applied in El Salvador's Civic Strike of 1944. After an unsuccessful armed insurrection, the strike overturned the Martinez government and restored constitutional government.<sup>10</sup>

Back in the United States, the Congress of Racial Equality was beginning to use sit-in actions to challenge racial segregation there. By the 1950s, African-Americans and white allies led by Martin Luther King had adopted satyagraha non-cooperation to challenge racial segregation in every public institution in the US.<sup>11</sup> An entire student population of many thousands pushed integration sit-ins further all across the South, into commercial establishments, theaters, churches, every venue where the public was allowed.<sup>12</sup> The civil rights laws passed by the US Congress in 1965 gave solid legal and moral legitimacy to nonviolent direct action as a citizen's means of rights protection.

Nor was the influence of satyagraha absent from its birthplace, Gandhi's South Africa. The African National Congress and its allies in the 1950s was already building a movement of resistance to the apartheid system that would in a struggle of more than three decades lead to a multiracial egalitarian society.<sup>13</sup> The labour movement was particularly instrumental in this process as were the economic sanctions applied to apartheid by much of the outside world.

Nonviolent resistance was used in the Muslim world as well. Resisting Israel's occupation of Palestine and particularly its plans to absorb it legally, a civil resistance movement known as the *intifada* began in the late 1960s. "A pattern of civic resistance soon developed that persisted for the next twenty years, consisting of strikes by merchants, businesses, and schools, demonstrations by marchers, the display of Palestinian flags or national colours, and the chanting of slogans calling for independence."<sup>14</sup> The *intifada* was really the civilian expression of the larger Palestine liberation movement whose

paramilitary activity was better known to the outside world.

The Albanian Muslim community in Kosovo responded to Serbian repression in the early 1990s with imaginative civil resistance through parallel structures reminiscent of Gandhi's creation of an alternative education system. When Albanian language schools and university were closed or restricted by the Serbs, the Kosovars led by Ibrahim Rugova opened their own.<sup>15</sup> Kosovar education was supported by a clandestine tax system. Parallel structures for health care, information media, art and sports were likewise developed as the Serbs increasingly closed state institutions to Muslims. Family members outside Serbia sent money as Muslims lost their employment.

Wherever people were living under oppression in the post-Gandhian world, his model for self-limiting conflict was applicable and often applied. No more vicious oppression could be found than in Sicily, where the Mafia ruled by secrecy and terror. There, the "reverse strike" was developed by a Gandhian educator, Danilo Dolci, by which peasants took on socially useful labor projects, such as roadbuilding, they were forbidden to do by Mafia threat.<sup>16</sup>

*National defence.* A national population under military occupation might well find nonviolent resistance an attractive and perhaps singular option. When the Ruhrkampf developed, in a defeated and occupied Germany in 1923, Gandhi's model was already known in Europe. The civilian population of the Ruhr, resisting what it considered unfair and harmful retribution from its Allied occupiers was perhaps the first instance of the creation of parallel institutions outside India. Protecting national institutions already in place from an occupier was imaginatively illustrated two decades later in Denmark<sup>17</sup> and Norway<sup>18</sup>. Then, however, the Germans were the occupiers.

As the Cold War reached proportions in the 1970s which threatened global nuclear catastrophe, peace activists were working in the democratic nations to reverse nuclear weapons development and reduce the threat of nuclear war.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, peace researchers were developing the concept of *social defence* that might be useful for Western Europe to defend itself against the Soviet Union without igniting a nuclear war. Social defence was a strategy for unarmed national defence based in massive civilian unarmed resistance.<sup>20</sup> Important elements in the strategy were the disciplined training of the population in non-cooperation with an invader and the clear illustration made to the potential occupier of the difficulty a resisting population would present. The threat of nuclear war and Europe's vulnerability were so great at that time that several nations including Sweden and Denmark commissioned feasibility studies of unarmed

defense. The Alternative Defense Commission (1983) produced an extensive analysis urging a British shift to a non-nuclear defence policy that would include training the population in civil resistance.

Social defence advocates like Gene Sharp argued that political rule whether by a national government or a foreign invader was not possible without a people's cooperation.<sup>21</sup> Thus, a political regime could be either brought down or protected by civil resistance. A tyrant could be deposed or control of a nation could be denied an occupier if the people refused to cooperate. Gandhi's success with satyagraha was the primary historical reference for social defence theorists, an historical illustration of how civil resistance carefully planned and controlled could achieve goals without evoking violent repression. Illustrations of this conflict-limiting approach were presenting themselves throughout the 1980s. Poland's Solidarity movement inserted the wedge for democratic reform in Eastern Europe.<sup>22</sup> Filipinos were learning how to oust dictators without bloodshed.<sup>23</sup> The Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia displaced the Communist government there in 1989 with a fine balance of escalation and restraint.<sup>24</sup>

The success of each instance of nonviolent resistance I have noted depended on the ability of movement leaders and followers alike to balance their resistance with the opponent's inclination to respond with physical force. If resistance was too forceful and threatening, the conflict would escalate out of control and the movement would be violently crushed. Careful words, actions, planning, and timing were all essential for the successful defence of political freedom, human rights, national governments, even group safety and wellbeing that nonviolent direct action seeks.

How close is the connection, if any, between Gandhi's self-limiting conflict model and the many satyagraha-like movements emerging in post-Gandhian decades? The relationship I have implied here is no more than conjecture. Where there are clear leaders who admit Gandhi's influence on their thinking, does it appear in their strategy and tactics? If the model does seem influential does it have the moral and spiritual bases of satyagraha or is it simply *duragraha*, a pragmatic method? Needed here is a serious study of these cases to find and analyze the model's influence and if there, how it was modified for specific contexts and conditions. Nor can we assume that Gandhi actually worked as I have suggested, or did so consciously and deliberately.

### Gandhi in Contemporary India

In light of the growing influence Gandhian nonviolence appears to

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have had in the world since his death, it is curious that in the India of today it seems to have declined. One understands that India took the road to development of Nehru not Gandhi, that Hindu-Muslim relations went the way of Jinna's Pakistan and Kashmir, that an urbanizing India left Shanti Sena, bhoodan and other Gandhian institutions rooted in the Village India struggling to survive. Yet, given its inter-communal unrest and nationalist, sectarian politics, modern India would seem to need satyagraha and its institutional bases as much as before. As Varshney suggests, in cities like Surat where the intercommunal civic life nurtured by Gandhi has persisted, conflict control and violence prevention have been most successful. Small-step experimentation in the Gandhian way still occurs, as in communities such as Bhiwandi, where an early warning system of intercommunal committees works well to forestall violence.<sup>25</sup> Satyagraha's tradition of openness still lives but struggles to survive against the rumor and misinformation of communalism. Where are the researchers mining Gandhi's way of conflict control for institutions and methods appropriate for the human relations problems of his beloved India?

### Conclusion

With violence within and between nations remaining one of the world's most serious problems, there is much to be learned from Gandhi's experience with limiting conflict; his creation of and reliance on institutions and interaction networks close to daily life; his self-limiting approach to both escalating and reducing confrontation; his satisfaction with small victories and incremental progress; his primary concern with truth in communication and conditions on the ground. The success of satyagraha was largely built on such methods. Even without their spiritual basis, today's India might do well to train its young people in the practical skills of Gandhi's way.

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*Dr. Mahendra Kumar* was professor of Political Science at the University of Delhi, and was an editor of *Gandhi Marg*, the quarterly journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation. His major publications include *Theoretical Aspects of International Politics*; *India and Unesco*; *Peace Research and India*; and *Violence and Nonviolence in International Relations*. He has delivered occasional lectures and has also served as a visiting professor at several universities in Canada and the United States.

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# Dealings in Satyagraha and Lending the Land (Patterns in ideology and institution building in the Bhoodan andolan and its present)

*Rahul Ramagundam*

## Introduction

IT IS SAID that the bhoodan andolan in the country is a dying movement without having reached its final destination. However, in states like Bihar, it did achieve substantial success although there are many who characterize it as an 'agrarian reform from the top'<sup>1</sup>. Launched in April 1951, the land-gift movement, as the Bhoodan andolan was called, attempted to persuade the landlords of India to part with one-sixth of their land for redistribution among the landless poor. In an assessment written in 1976, Pradhan H. Prasad noted, "The approach of 'conversion by gentle persuasion'...has failed."<sup>2</sup> While on the one hand, the Bhoodan movement was accused of causing fragmentation of the land holdings in uneconomic units, on the other hand it was alleged that it was an inadequate answer to the problem of India's iniquitous land ownership.

Gaya in south Bihar was a citadel of the movement in all its glory. The Gaya district office, one of the twenty-five such district offices in Bihar, of the Bihar Bhoodan Yajna Committee, a body statutorily recognized by the state government, contains records of survey data, donation pledges, distribution certificates etc., and is a storehouse of

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an enormous amount of paperwork and bookkeeping that went into the making of the movement. It was this crumbling building with a mud-tiled roof, containing rat-ridden and moth-eaten documentary proofs of the movement that initially drew my attention. I became interested in unravelling the elements that went into transforming the movement into an institution, although for all practical purposes, Vinoba Bhave (1895-1982), the pioneer of the movement, himself was a non-committal institutional man. A perusal of the records revealed that the movement had the ambition of building a revenue and land management system that was almost parallel to the existing state administration.

Literature on the movement, besides eulogies by the Sarvodayi<sup>3</sup> sympathizers, is sparse and unsparing in its criticism. The left literature on the question of land reform has given a condescending glance at an ideological rival. From the dismissive remarks about the Bhoodan andolan contained in the left leaning literature, it seems that most see the Sarvodayi initiative as an infantile effort, at best a reformist zeal that had nebulous chances of success in solving one of the protracted and complex issues in the newly independent country. It is also thought to be an attempt, ably supported by and at the behest of the then Congress governments, to divert national energy and attention from an impending and revolutionary reorganization of land ownership through the organized left movements. It has been said, even during Vinoba's times, that the Bhoodan movement was begun in order to supplant and ideologically suppress the communist movement for land reform. The theory of an embedded-in-government movement gains credence from the fact that the origin of the andolan lay in the Sarvodayi response to the violent Telangana movement (1946-51) that seemingly could have turned into a revolutionary reorganization of the productive assets, particularly land. D. N. Dhanagare writes, "In April 1951 Acharya Vinoba Bhave met some Communist Party of India leaders who were under detention. It is not without significance that soon a number of detainees were released by the government."<sup>4</sup>

The reason for the criticism of the Bhoodan andolan is that whereas the left insurrectionary struggles, such as the one in Telangana, are seen as paradigmatic, the Bhoodan andolan is characterized, at best, as reformatory. Its agenda of effecting non-violent change in the ownership of property is not seen as having much consequence. The 'revolution through reform', as the Bhoodan andolan was characterized by Sarvodayi enthusiasts, paled into insignificance in the left intellectual understanding that thought revolution can only happen through the path of annihilation. Pradhan H. Prasad after making an 'extensive survey' of the movement in Bihar wrote an evaluation that

negated the possibility that the “‘Sarvodaya Movement’ is even remotely leading anywhere near social and economic justice”.<sup>5</sup> It is another matter that in the marginalized Sarvodayi literature, the Bhoodan andolan is seen as a ‘historical miracle’. ‘What was this?’ Vinoba himself wondered upon receiving the first gift of hundred acres in Telangana. “People murder for land, go to court over land, yet here it comes as a free gift”, he observed. It is also another matter that the land redistribution through the Bhoodan andolan has been more substantive in terms of acres distributed and the number of recipients involved.<sup>6</sup>

It is in this context of the contested legacy that this analysis of the Bhoodan andolan is attempted. The attempt at analysis gains urgency as various state governments in one way or the other have been engaged in writing obituaries of the movement’s legacy.<sup>7</sup> A Bihar government constituted law committee has recommended an annulment of some twenty laws that were enacted at various times by the Bihar assembly.<sup>8</sup> It is said that these laws have lost relevance in the context of contemporary Bihar, and hence their abrogation is a need of the changed times and society. Among the laws to be abrogated, one is the Bihar Bhoodan Yajna Act, 1954, brought into existence to manage and distribute land received by the Bhoodan andolan. Does the presence of such laws affect the functioning of the state, in any substantial manner? How does a state, made increasingly irrelevant to the majority of its citizens by its own wilted status, become concerned at the presence of ‘irrelevant laws’? The answer to the question lies in the agitation of the hundred-odd employees of the state Bhoodan committee to get at least the state sanctioned minimum wages. The state’s response to their agitation is to abrogate the law that provides them employment - a case of throwing the baby with the bath water. A study of the Bhoodan andolan therefore says something about the way a state or society treats a social movement when it is past its prime. The present essay combines a study of documentation of the movement at the Gaya Bhoodan office and insights from field visits in rural Gaya. Further, I attempt a Gandhian critique of this post-independent, post-Gandhi Sarvodayi action that purportedly was Gandhian in ideology. It was perhaps the last of campaign on the issues of livelihood that involved volunteers on a large scale.

### **Gandhi and the Land Question**

Early 1950s was a period of considerable hope and faith in India. Gandhi’s murder in 1948, instead of dampening the national mood, had only strengthened the resolve in a nation that was soon to become

a republic to stride ahead against all odds. The Telangana movement evidently brought agenda of land reform to the fore that the new nation was called upon to address. Here two issues from the Gandhian agenda need some serious attention. The first is Gandhi's attitude towards the question of land reform, and the second is his attitude towards those who were, to borrow a phrase from today's development discourse, the 'beneficiaries' of the movements and the social actions that he had initiated and led. Both these issues, of his thoughts and actions on the issue of land reform and of the engagement of the oppressed in their liberation struggle, need specific delineation as it helps us to unravel Vinoba's own brand of the Sarvodaya initiative and ideology.

All through the national struggle for freedom, with Gandhi at the helm, the Mahatma had consistently refused to dwell on issues pertaining to land reform and consequently earned substantial wrath from his radical colleagues. Khadi, the production of hand spun and hand woven cloth by masses, was his strategy to solve the problem of the massive rural idleness, an issue he had always raised and fought for all through the national struggle.<sup>9</sup> 'Can't we solve the problem', asked a correspondent to Gandhi in 1926, "by dispossessing these zamindars and distributing their land among the poor?"<sup>10</sup> In a similar vein Nehru too had complained that the remedy suggested by Gandhi for poverty alleviation had not touched "the fundamental causes of poverty". In 1928, an indignant Nehru had written, 'You do not say a word against the semi-feudal zamindari system which prevails in a great part of India'.<sup>11</sup> In 1936, Nehru alleged that Gandhi was guilty of "supporting a system which involves a continuous and devastating class war".<sup>12</sup> Nehru, moreover, believed in the inevitability of class conflict. In 1934, the Congress Socialist Party, of which Nehru was a leading light, espoused a "wholesale expropriation of the propertied classes".<sup>13</sup> Gandhi had then merely stated that the programmes of the Socialist Party tended to "ignore Indian conditions".

In response to the radical demand for land reform, Gandhi pointed at his inability to do anything basic while the government was alien. But his response was double-edged. At first, he said, nothing could be gained by forcibly dispossessing the landlords of their land. The *Pioneer* of July 25, 1934 reported Gandhi having reiterated in 'Answers to Zamindars' that "I shall be no party to dispossessing the propertied classes of their private property without just cause".<sup>14</sup> He expected "to convert the zamindars and other capitalists by non-violent methods".<sup>15</sup> "They only need a change of the heart. When that is done, and when they learn to melt at their tenants' woe, they will hold their lands in trust for them, will give them the major part of

their produce keeping only enough for themselves.”<sup>16</sup> Gandhi was working for ‘cooperation and coordination of capital and labour and of landlords and tenants’. ‘Class war’ Gandhi asserted, “is foreign to the essential genius of India which is capable of evolving a form of communism broad-based on the fundamental rights of all and equal justice to all.”<sup>17</sup> Gandhi said he did believe in the existence of class struggle. What he, however, did not believe in was the necessity of fomenting and keeping it up.<sup>18</sup> Reform in land entitlement was an agenda that Gandhi had skirted during the freedom struggle, but he did not obviate its inevitability once India was free.

“All land”, Gandhi said, quoting a song, “belongs to Gopal.” He added, “Gopal...means the State, i.e., the people... Land and all property is his who will work it...Unfortunately the workers are or have been kept ignorant of this fact”.<sup>19</sup> And therefore it is the duty of the oppressed to resist, Gandhi said significantly. “A slave is a slave because he consents to slavery.” But, he added, it must be a non-violent resistance. “The oppressed need no education, except in satyagraha and non-cooperation.”<sup>20</sup> He argued, “if the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power. The moment the cultivators of the soil realize their power, the zamindari evil will be sterilized.”<sup>21</sup> Claiming that he was not for a ‘patchwork’, he said, “When labour is intelligent enough to organize itself and learns to act as one man, it will have the same weight as money if not much greater.”<sup>22</sup> Gandhi was firm that nothing enduring could be built on violence. And any attempt to rearrange land holdings in rural India through state sponsored violence or even through groups advocating violent methods for social change would mean a bloody India and a swaraj of the few. “Those who think of the other methods are vainly flattering themselves with hope of success. The agriculturist never figures in their calculations, or at any rate they do not know his condition.”<sup>23</sup> A violent route entailed a permanent subservience of the non-participating majority to the violent minority.

To summarize, Gandhi said he would not be a party to the dispossession of the zamindars without a ‘just cause’ and then he added that the land belonged to those “who will work it”. In the second part of his response, he exhorted the toilers to stand up and be counted by resorting to non-violent resistance and non-cooperation for the ‘just cause’. In this enterprise an awakened self rather than a naked sword was required. “Do not draw the sword. Sheathe it. The sword will only cut our own throats”, he explained while underlining that the enfranchisement of the millions of Indians was only possible through a non-violent struggle.<sup>24</sup> So, even while the core of resistance was non-violence, resistance itself was not shunned. Gandhi desired



a centrality of the oppressed in their struggle. Support from outside could be provided; it could even be a necessity, but the oppressed were not passive recipients. It was here that Vinoba's Bhoodan enterprise faltered. The Bhoodan movement broke the hard worked tradition of Gandhian Satyagraha.

### **Bhoodan Movement**

The Bhoodan andolan, the land-gift movement, was a brilliantly simple conception. It was a campaign to give land to the poor. It was a movement remarkable for its magnificent conviction and moral dimension. It had started as the solitary vision of a saint but became a national movement. Yet in Vinoba's movement the content of ideology and institution building was weak and therefore, given this most telling deficiency, it was most unlike Gandhi's ideas. Vinoba was primarily consumed by the ambitious task of redistributing land ownership in a peaceful and non-violent way. In the course of his work, Vinoba created six *ashramic* institutions, but he was intrinsically uncomfortable with the thought of institution making. And here lay the main problem of the Bhoodan *yajna* from a practical point of view. "After Vinoba had walked on to the next village – and he very rarely stayed more than one night in any single place – many villages developed factions and disagreements leading to disillusion and the rapid flickering out of the Bhoodan spirit which Vinoba had inspired."<sup>25</sup> This failure is explained by an acolyte as Vinoba's astonishing detachment from the results. Nothing is said about the organization or its crippling absence that made realization of what was set to be achieved a disappointment. In his wanderings in Bihar, Vinoba asked for land as well as one-sixth of the people's money. But he simply accepted a written pledge. The donor kept the money but pledged to devote one-sixth of his wealth every year to public service. It saved Vinoba from maintaining an accounting system and institutionalizing an incorruptible means for fund disbursement.

Vinoba saw poverty as the biggest bane of the society. Poverty, he said, is frozen violence. Poverty, in his conception, did not emanate from systemic corruption but was an institution by itself whose eradication could be achieved independently of the socio-economic structure that sustained it. It was due to this understanding that his Bhoodan andolan was less about the concerns of the oppressed, although the land was sought in their name. The Bhoodan andolan was an appeal to the sustainers of the system that bred poverty. Vinoba's mathematical mind calculated that to sustain a poor family of five, what one most needs is five acres of land. He led a movement that appealed to the sentiments of the propertied people and invited

them to make a voluntary sacrifice of one-sixth of their total landholding. He asked land in the name of a sixth son of a propertied father. He unleashed his moral force to assemble thousands of upper caste, philanthropically inclined, middle class young men to undertake the task of collecting land. Most existing Gandhian individuals and institutions hitched their hopes on Vinoba's mission. In Bihar, where Vinoba remained for the longest period of his campaign and achieved substantial success in his agenda, he received the unstinting support from Jaiprakash Narain (JP) (1902-1979). In 1954, JP dedicated his life (he made a 'Jeevan-Dan') for the Sarvodayi agenda of the Bhoodan.

The Bhoodan activists collected land and took upon themselves the task to distribute the donated land to the landless. In all this, the beneficiaries were never exhorted to participate. Writes Prabhat, "In the process of receiving the land-gift, there was no active involvement of the *dalits* and the landless. Neither could any organization of the beneficiaries evolve."<sup>26</sup> Prabhat further writes that despite tens of thousands of landless receiving land from the Bhoodan movement, it did not open up possibilities of a large-scale change in society. In the absence of activism among its intended beneficiaries and organization at the bottom level, the andolan primarily hinged 'its hope on the compassion of the landowners. In order to arouse their compassion, the Sarvodayi activists adopted the means of 'gentle, gentler and gentlest' persuasion, but there was no vision of Gandhi's Satyagraha in it that could arouse the consciousness of the oppressed. Later, even JP admitted that the andolan kept its sights focused on the rich and resourceful. "In it there was very limited role for the oppressed, the weak and the deprived".<sup>27</sup> In the quest for Sarvodaya meaning "all should rise, should grow, and all includes the lowliest and last", the target of empowering 'the lowliest and last' actually became blurred.

Vinoba's appeal was to the heart of the potential 'givers', while the 'receivers' merely underwent a body count. In his introduction to Vinoba's memoirs, Satish Kumar, writes, "Vinoba's practice was never to antagonize the landlords, but to assist them to act rightly." Vinoba, therefore, would not bang his head on the wall but try to find a little door. "When I meet a landlord he has many faults and shortcomings, and his egotism is like a wall. But he has a little door, a little goodness in his heart. Don't worry about his faults, find the door."<sup>28</sup> After all, it was the good Jamnalal Bajaj (d.1940) who had given his land for Vinoba's ashram at Paunar in Wardha. It was also Bajaj again who had invited Gandhi to Wardha and donated the land for his Sewagram ashram. In fact, most Gandhian institutions in Wardha had one common benefactor in Jamnalal Bajaj, a cotton-merchant, a money-lender and a local zamindar. Vinoba saw the softness in Bajaj's heart.

He thought he could open up a similar door in the heart of every zamindar in the country.

In attempting to do so, he discounted a Sanskrit proverb that says you make a gift of a dying cow to the Brahmin. In this way, you get the providence to smile upon you with a minimum of expenditure and even by disposing off economically demanding things. It is true that Vinoba and even Gandhi received land from Bajaj, but here too, as in the above story, the land given was not famously fertile. These lands, even with the subsidies and commitment could not become viable units capable of producing enough for Ashram inmates. Something similar was the case with the recipients of the Bhoodan land. Most of the Bhoodan land donated by big landlords needed to be prepared for cultivation. Not only the land was bad and strewn with pebbles, but the sources of irrigation were absent.

It made the job of the poor recipients doubly difficult, and owing to the uncertainty attached with rain-fed farming, many of them either left the land uncultivated for long and preferred to work on wages or illegally sold off or even returned it to the original donors. It was a strange trap for the poor. It was a movement for them to gain ownership of a piece of land, but it gave them unviable, poorly irrigated and unprepared land. Their inability to make a living out of the gifted land was seen as their traditional incapacity to be independent farmers and a cultural trait that bespeaks the non-accumulative and unthinking ways of their living. In the Bhoodan andolan, there was no attempt to search for a door into the heart of a landless farmer.

### **On Paper: Evidence from the Past at Gaya**

Gaya's terrain, located between the Jharkhand plateau in the south and the Gangetic plain in the north, is littered with names of villages such as Vinobapuri, Vinoba Nagar, Bapu-Gram, Bapu-Nagar, Bandhu Nagar, Laxmipur, Shanti-Nagar, Sarvodaya Puri, Jaiprakash Nagar, Syamsunder Nagar, Bhoop Nagar etc., which is a legacy of its recent activist past. The new names of the villages were not supplanted over the older existing ones. They are new settlements with new names where poor, landless families were brought in after being liberated from the servitude of zamindars and settled on Bhoodan land. These names are associated with the Sarvodaya ideology and activists.

They remind Gaya of its most fertile civil society past, when activists came from all over the country to work for its poor. Donor aided voluntary institutions were founded in which individuals, both from India and abroad, were engaged in distributing the Bhoodan land to the poor and later in developing some of this land.<sup>29</sup>

Although the idea of the Bhoodan movement had first emerged

in a village in the Telangana region of the then Hyderabad State, Bihar was Vinoba's land of experiment. Vinoba hoped that a 'non-violent revolution based on bhoodan and spear-headed by village industry' would be brought to pass in Bihar. Vinoba walked through Bihar from September 1952 to the end of December 1954, and received twenty-three lakhs acres of land. Vinoba's trek through Bihar—the longest trek that he made in any State—a trek of twenty-seven months—has a very special significance. Of the total land received by the andolan in gift-deeds from all over the country, around half of it was given by the landlords of Bihar (with Jharkhand).<sup>30</sup>

In Bihar, it was Gaya that really became Vinoba's laboratory for a non-violent revolution of land redistribution among the landless. Most of the Gaya land came under the British sponsored Permanent Settlement introduced in Bengal and Bihar in 1793 under which the zamindars were given the rights to collect rent from the land-users. On the throes of independence, the region boasted of estate-owning zamindars who owned thousand of acres of land by virtue of their wealth. They were absentee landlords. Ban Bihari Bhoop (1913-1999) was one of them. He gave some 5000 acres of land to the Bhoodan committee.

The Bhoop family was one of the biggest zamindars of the Gaya district. It is said that under the influence of Vinoba Bhave, Ban Bihari Bhoop, in 1955, gave up much of his landholdings that were distributed by the Bhoodan committee among the landless. Bhoop was known for his spiritual bent of mind and his renunciation. He translated the Bhagwad Gita into Hindi, and it was duly published and carries a 'blessing' from Vinoba. It is said that with each passing day, he was getting more and more immersed in his *bhakti* to Lord Krishna. "Bhoop had a non-political association with the Congress", is how his son puts it now. His home was the hub of the Sarvodaya activists. He regularly hosted Vinoba and Jaiprakash Narain. In 1959, Martin Luther King, Jr. visited Gaya and spent some time with Bhoop and his family at 'Durga Kothi', his mansion. In his meeting with King, Bhoop expressed his desire to translate the *Stride towards Freedom* into Hindi. But King by that time had already given its rights for publication to Ahmedabad's Navajivan. For long, the Bhoodan work was carried out from his residential complex and the Gaya Bhoodan Committee paid him no rent. Even now, the Committee only pays a nominal rent. Ban Bihari is survived by two sons. They live off selling the still remaining land in the town of Gaya.

Ban Bihari Bhoop gave 1205 acres of land to the Bhoodan Committee and on which Lutwa ashram in the Lutwa Panchayat of the Banke Bazar bloc was founded. It was from here that activities to

introduce better cultivation practices and develop irrigation infrastructure in a famine stricken region were undertaken. Today Lutwa ashram is in disarray. Its building, land and farm-produce are under the command of the local cadres of the Maoist militia. Ban Bihari also donated some 100 acres of land to the Bhoodan Committee on which Bhoop Nagar, a village in the Amas bloc is founded and is named after him. In Bhoop Nagar some fourteen Musahar, a depressed caste, families were settled.

There were other big donors too. Besides the prince of Tekhari, there were, for example, Masuk Ali Khan son of Eslad Ali Khan and Saiffudin Khan, son of Fazlu Karim Khan, both of the Bhadya village in the Barachatti bloc, whose donation of 42 acres and 482 acres respectively gave landownership to most of the residents of the Sondaha village in the Banke Bazar bloc. The land was given by all kinds of donors - big, small and medium landowners. Most of the land, however, was donated by a few big zamindars. In the permanent settlement regions, the zamindars had the rights over the natural resources such as water-bodies or forest lying within their permanently settled jurisdiction. It is these areas that were lying unused that were first donated under the Bhoodan. Massive numbers of acres of land were gifted by individuals and those lands were later found to belong to the State Forest Department or did not legally belong to the donor himself. For instance, Mazrul Haq Saheb son of Ali-Navi Saheb, a resident of the village Maira-Bigha in Mau declared a gift of 200 acres which on a survey by Bhoodan workers in 1965 were found to fall within the jurisdiction of the forest department and were therefore invalidated from distribution.

Small and medium landowners, too, gave a part of their land. But it was the most complicated of gifts. Some of the small gifts of less than an acre were unviable for cultivation and were thus never occupied by those to whom it was given. Such land remained effectively in the hands of the donors. Some of the small gift-makers played a double game and sold off their land, even while they had promised it as a land-gift. Some donated land that they had already sold or sold it immediately upon the declaration of donation. Babu Panchratan Lal son of Dongarlal of Shergahti gave 145 acres of land, but it was found in a survey conducted in 1965 that the donation was not valid. Chandradev Rai gave 0.4 acres, but upon investigation it was found that he had already sold the land.

Many of the donors announced their donations amid fanfare and before Vinoba himself. But upon surveys, many discrepancies were found. Most of the land-gifts were made of land that did not belong to the village of which the donor was a resident. Because of this

anomaly, many could boast of land-gifts and earn immediate social applaud, but actual transaction was never made. This gave rise to chances of false declaration of donations. In Vishnupur village of the Arnas Block many of the donors turned out to be non-existent. It was also not possible to find out their whereabouts. It was possible that such donors belonged to some other village with the same name. Such notes were made by the Bhoodan activists who went to undertake surveys of the donated land. It is not clear from their noting, however, if the claims of such donors were reinvestigated into, or if the noting of the activists were taken as conclusive. In some village surveys, it was found that some of donors had no land. In the village Nauwa-Khap, out of eleven eight donors were found to possess no land at all. Did the discrepancy between public promises and private procrastinations happen because the donors changed their minds? Did it involve corruption of the Bhoodan workers? It is possible that the Bhoodan workers were bribed to make negative noting about the existence of donated land.

Such information as given above is contained in the documents kept in the record room of the Gaya District Bhoodan Yajna Samiti. The Bhoodan activists, after having received an intimation of the intention of a donor of land, undertook a survey of the land. The survey records were meticulously maintained, and specific remarks were written for each surveyed piece of land. It was an ambitious documentation effort, which was voluntarily undertaken.

Massive hard bounds of printed forms still exist. Records were maintained under the district Bhoodan receiving committee. A perusal of the documents reveals the massive effort that was put into developing a detailed land-map of each village. A detailed record of the land of each village was outlined under heads such as 1) the total village population, 2) the total village land in acres, 3) the total number of families, 4) the total number of landless families, 5) the number of families that possessed land between (a) 5-25 acres, (b) 26-50 acres, (c) 51-75 acres, (d) 76-100 acres, (e) 101+ acres. After listing general information, there were heads seeking (a) detailed positioning of each piece of land received under the Bhoodan; details such as what lay to the north, south, east and west of the gifted lands were recorded. Each piece of gifted land carried a number and details of its former ownership. There was also a list of other items such as agricultural implements and irrigational facilities that the donors were encouraged to give.

The Bhoodan Dan Patra (the declaration of donation) was a one page printed form that the Bhoodan workers filled out at the site of public meetings when the donors, driven by Vinoba's moral call, were

enthused to donate a part of their landholdings. This was a copy of the verbal pledge that was often made before Vinoba. Some such forms bear signature of Vinoba as a recipient. It had simple wordings: 'I from my total acreage give—acres to Vinoba for the use of his Land-Gift Mission'. The document was adopted as legal. The information about the donated land culled from the *dan patra* was tabulated in massive A8 sized printed data books that were hard bound.

A number of survey forms were designed and printed for the collection and tabulation of information. Form number one contained columns for the tabulation of details about the gift-maker and the gifted land. The entry was made according to the serial number of the *dan patra*. Form number one contained heads such as the serial number of the *dan patra*, the name and address of the gift-maker, the acreage of the land gifted, details of the gifted land after the field survey and the geographical location of the gifted-land.

Form number two had details about the type of land-gift that were tabulated after an actual field survey. The survey of the gifted land was done by the Amin, the land surveyor, appointed and deputed to the Bhoodan committee at the government's expense. The survey was necessitated by the need to know the actual state of the gifted land. The survey decided upon the quality of the land gifted. The type of land was decided according to the availability of a source of irrigation. There were three types of land. The first type of land, called *dhanhar*, had an assured and sufficient source of irrigation. In such land with assured irrigation through canals or *pynes*, paddy was a commonly grown crop. The second land quality was called *bhit* that was primarily rain fed. In such land crops needing less water were grown. The third quality of land was those which lay fallow. Such land was called *parti*. The land classification was done according to land's productivity and potential for irrigation. Form number two also said whether the land belonged to individual farmer, *raiyat*, or belonged to a landlord, a *zamindar*.

Form number three contained information about recipients, such as the name of the head of the recipient family, the number of members in each family, and their respective occupations. It was a village list of landless families that were potential beneficiaries of land-gifts. It listed their educational and economic status and the caste categories to which they belonged.

Form number four contained the names of the receivers and the quantity and type of land being given under the Bhoodan. If each of the donors submitted a *dan patra*, each of the beneficiaries received a *praman patra* from the Bhoodan committee. Form number five was a *praman patra*, the certificate of possession, given to the beneficiary. Its

main part was ceremonially given in a public occasion to the Bhoodan beneficiary. The counterfoil was kept in the district Bhoodan office. The district Bhoodan office also retained the right to reissue a new *praman patra* in case of its destruction. It is this right to issue substitute *praman patra* that is the *raison d'être* for the Bhoodan office, which is still in existence with a few staff. Form number six contained a summary of the previous forms. It also had a space for the name and signature of the Bhoodan worker as well as the chairman of the distribution committee.

The documentation effort seems to have lost its steam midway. Most of the big survey books remain incomplete. The survey had aimed for collecting and collating village data on land possessions and available resource. Presently, the records in the Gaya Bhoodan office are in various stages of destruction wrought by time, societal indifference and ignorance, a resource crunch, crumbling-legacy, and corruption.

The Bhoodan movement had to traverse four distinct stages in order to complete the agenda of the land reform. First was the stage of the *donation* of the land or what is uniquely called the collection of land-gift. The second stage was when the existence of the gifted land was *confirmed* and its quality measured by means of a detailed survey by the government sponsored Amins-the professional land managers. The third stage was the *distribution* of the confirmed land to the landless, and finally, the fourth stage of revenue *assessment* for each piece of the distributed land in the name of the individual receivers. The first stage of donation was completed by the end of the fifties. The progress of the confirmation stage was tardy as the Government took its time in appointing the Amins who were solely designated to measure and confirm the gifted land. The rate of distribution among the landless was even slower as the landless had to be found, listed, confirmed and then given the possession of the land.

The distribution process is where the Bhoodan andolan got stalled. It was in the beginning of the movement itself that the progenitors of the movement realized that the task of redistributing the received land was daunting. As the process of confirmation and distribution could not be completed without professional facilitation of the Amins, their appointment became a cause of discontent between the government of Bihar and the Bhoodan organizers. In 1954, a Bihar State Bhoodan Yajna Samiti was statutorily constituted to undertake the task of managing the records of the land received and the land distributed. The Samiti had famed Bihari politicians and activists on its governing body. In each district of Bihar, the Samiti established an office to facilitate the redistribution of the gifted land. In the sixties,



the government appointed a total of 195 Amins for the whole of Bihar who were deputed to work along with the Bhoodan committee. Most of these Amins were Bhoodan activists. Even though they were appointed because of pressure from the Bhoodan committee, the Amins' appointments were temporary in nature, and their tenures were not renewed. As the temporary tenures ended and were not renewed, a decline in the number of Amins set in, which qualitatively and quantitatively affected the committee's work of confirmation and distribution. The Amins were under dual authority; they marked their attendance at the Bhoodan office and received their pay from the government's revenue department.

The distribution of the received land among the landless was the most important task ahead, but it was delayed by a number of factors. The distribution work required careful execution and was a time-consuming activity. The land was to be distributed among the landless with the facilitation of village residents who came in for a general meeting, the 'Gram Sabha'. A 'Gram Sabha' was conducted by an authorized Bhoodan committee representative. Each designated landless person was given a '*praman patra*' (Form No. 5) that contained a detailed description of the land that was being gifted.

For the purpose of speeding up the distribution process, *Bhu-Vitran Toli* (Land Distribution Mobile Group) was constituted. Yet it did not help much, it seems. Today, in the Gaya district, the data at the Bhoodan committee office give the following picture<sup>31</sup>:

The total number of *dan patras* under the Gaya office jurisdiction: 27,466  
 The total land received under the Bhoodan: 52,437 acres .89 dismil  
 The Bhoodan land that has been distributed as yet: 28,514 acres .78 dismil  
 The number of beneficiaries that received a *praman patra*: 21,306  
 The remaining uncultivable land: 23,923 acres .11 dismil; of these only 10 percent is of distributable quality

A donor gave land to the Bhoodan Yajna committee. The Bhoodan committee referred the donated land to the Land Revenue Deputy Collector (LRDC), a government officer, for its confirmation. The LRDC in turn issued a notice to the concerned parties that included the donor, the village, the Block-officer and the Panchayat to raise objections, if any, within a stipulated time. It was only after the issuance of confirmation from the office of the LRDC that the land was earmarked for distribution. The Bhoodan committee issued *praman patra* to the rightful receivers of the gifted land. Form number ten was sent to the revenue department for intimation of changed ownership and revenue assessment and collection. The first problem

sprang up here, as the government officials, either due to the factor of the extreme poverty of those who received the donated land or due to their own laxity, did not collect revenues from the new landowners.

The dual structure of the autonomous Bhoodan committee and the government's revenue department was the main hindrance in the successful completion of the Bhoodan andolan's aim. This dual authority that became more confusing than facilitating created spaces for frustrations and subversions. Whereas the Bhoodan committee had the power to collect and give certificates of ownership to the Bhoodan farmers, upon distribution, it had no power to make revenue assessments and collect revenues for the land. If the Bhoodan committee had been given such a power, not only would the government have saved itself from the burden of being responsible for the Bhoodan workers, a better management of the Bhoodan land and the Bhoodan farmers could have been envisaged. Resources for the sustained work for the development of the Bhoodan land too could have been raised. Most land receivers, coming as they are from the poorest backgrounds, needed sustained support from dedicated cadres. In Gaya, the Bhoodan farmers who have prospered are those who have received sustained support over a period from a band of dedicated voluntary workers who worked on the Bhoodan land, trained good cultivation practices, provided them with irrigation facilities, and imparted other ancillary skills. The land which the landless *dalit* wage earners received from the Bhoodan did not undergo much cultivation and remained barren for a long time. But those lands which were received by the backward castes with some land of their own became prized possessions.

### **The Present Truth**

There are quite a few categories of problems that the Bhoodan farmer finds himself to be in. Every Bhoodan beneficiary receives a *praman patra* in which it is clearly mentioned that the Bhoodan land cannot be sold or transferred or put on lease. Yet the violation is substantial, and the Bhoodan committee with its hundred odd, meagrely paid workers mainly exists to provide legitimacy to this violation.

During the land settlement surveys, the surveyors in some cases opened a land account not in the name of the Bhoodan committee or in the name of the Bhoodan recipient but in the name of the donor. While the land in some cases remained under the possession of the receiver, the revenue receipt was in the name of the donor or in the name of his relatives.

Some land account was also opened in the name of the Bihar

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government. This was done in the cases where the receiver could not show his *praman patra*. Such land was used by the politicians in power to dispense patronage to the rural folks and to buy loyalty. Such land could sometimes be distributed many a times to different recipients, and that led to disputes, contrary claims and legal wrangling. Many such disputes saw the Bhoodan farmer, coming from the poorer sections, being dispossessed.

If a plot of Bhoodan land remained uncultivated for more than two years, by the Bhoodan law the one allotted land loses the right over the received land. This category of problems is mostly recurring in the present time. The land's cultivable status can only be confirmed if the farmer has paid revenues for it. As most Bhoodan landowners have not paid their revenue assessments their holdings are prone to ejection. A resourceful individual with the help of the revenue establishment and the Bhoodan worker not only gets a revenue receipt made in his name but also receives a *praman patra* from the Bhoodan office. After receiving the certificate of possession and lying low for some time, he either ejects the original Bhoodan tiller from the land by force or resorts to lengthy legal process for his removal.

Some of the land donated under the Bhoodan is claimed by the forest department, and that adds a new dimension to the ground struggle. These forest lands belonged to some of the estates that their owners donated to the movement. Now these lands are simultaneously claimed by both the Bhoodan owners in whose names the *praman patras* were issued and the forest department.

In the hand of the poor living in porous, mud-walled and thatched houses the paper certificates have all possibilities of being lost, burnt or simply destroyed with the passage of time. Once a *praman patra* is lost or destroyed, the only institution authorised to issue a new certificate is the Bhoodan committee. In some other cases, owing to a paucity of resources, the people who received land under the Bhoodan scheme did not cultivate it and preferred working as wage labourers but now when awareness has dawned and land value has increased, the same recipients are returning to the Bhoodan office demanding a demarcation and reclamation of their land-gift. But most often such farmers are made to run between the Bhoodan office and the revenue department of the government. As there is a total lack of coordination between the Bhoodan office and the government's revenue department, such farmers rarely get their dues. Issuing a *praman patra* has become a source of earning for the Bhoodan workers. It is a strange phenomenon that the areas in Gaya that saw the most effective distribution of the Bhoodan land also witnessed renewed Maoist violence and remain Maoist strongholds.

The Bhoodan committee structure nurtures one of the contemporary examples of exploitation. While an office worker receives rupees 580 a month, a Gaya office executive secretary gets rupees 860 a month, which is less than the sanctioned minimum wages. Payments are never made on a monthly basis but are paid intermittently, at best, at a six month interval. Employees, who are all male, receive neither any incentive to perform nor allowances while on visits to disputed land in rural areas. If any Bhoodan beneficiary farmer desires Bhoodan workers' presence to solve his land related disputes, the farmer invites them and bears expenses. Some 125 Bhoodan workers are engaged in a legal battle with the state of Bihar. Their charge against the state is that their payment is less than the state approved minimum daily wages of rupees seventy-five.

One of the things that possibly can be done with the existing Bhoodan structure is to merge it with state's revenue department. It is possible that such a merging shall give rise to greater corruption in the land management. The Bhoodan beneficiaries themselves are not in favour of this option, but alternatives seem scarce. Many of the Bhoodan farmers are trapped in legal wrangling due to one factor or another which is mostly due to the mishandling of Bhoodan workers or due to the factors enumerated above. A campaign mode needs to be adopted to make revenue assessments of the Bhoodan land and give revenue receipts to the Bhoodan farmers. The remaining Bhoodan land needs to be discovered, demarcated, and distributed among the landless claimants.

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30. The Bhoodan Andolan in Bihar, that then also included the present Jharkhand, received a total of 21 lakhs 17 thousand 756 acres of land Of those, Bihar's share was just 6 lakhs acres. Most of the land-gift was made in Jharkhand. Of the total of 6 lakhs acres that were

received by the Bhoodan Committee in Bihar, about 4 lakhs acres have been distributed. About 2 lakhs remain undistributed. Of these two lakhs acres, it is said that just about 10% is suitable for distribution; the rest is wasteland lying either as river beds or mountainous terrains.

31. *Bigha: kathas*: Six hand x Six hand = One Dhur, 20 Dhur = one Katha, One Bigha = 74 dismil = 20 katha, One Acre = One Bigha.6 katha.18 dhur = 1 bigha.7 katha;

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# Gandhian Theology of the Spinning Wheel

*Sarojini Henry*

THE YEAR 1947 was an eventful year in the history of the Indian subcontinent. On June 2, Viscount Lord Louis Mountbatten had announced the partitioning of the British India into Pakistan and India. The All India Congress Committee accepted the decision as inevitable. About the proceedings of this Committee a few days later, Roy Walker reports, "Nehru has spoken of the need for rapid industrialization of India, and when he presented the new flag of India to the Constituent Assembly, amidst cheers and loud cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai,' the spinning wheel had given place to the wheel of Asoka."<sup>1</sup> As a way of pacifying the Mahatma, Sarojini Naidu, playfully remarked that there was not much difference between the *Chakra* and Gandhi's wheel. It was a subtle transformation to Asoka's *dharma chakra*, the wheel of cosmic order, which became the symbol of new India. On Gandhi's reaction, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre wrote:

That disappointment was only the first in a harvest of sorrows awaiting the elderly leader in the nation he'd done so much to create. Not only was Gandhi's beloved India being divided, but the partitioned India soon to be born was going to bear little resemblance to the India Gandhi had dreamed of and fought for during his long crusade.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of independence, Jawaharlal Nehru's dream for India was, however, different from that of Gandhi. He strongly believed that India cannot be really independent unless she was modern,

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scientific, and technologically developed. Nehru was certainly not inclined to start the development process with a focus on villages and village industries. Many years later, Nehru was to change his mind; in 1963, just a year before his death, in the course of an address on the social aspects of development, Nehru poignantly expressed:

I begin to think more and more of Mahatma Gandhi's approach. It is odd that that I am mentioning his name in this connection, that is to say, I am entirely an admirer of the modern machine and I want best machinery and the best technique. But taking things as they are in India, however, rapidly we advance in the machine age, and will do so, the fact remains that a large number of our people are not touched and will not be touched by it for a considerable time."<sup>3</sup>

Nehru was probably right in expressing his fears that the then current development plans were not immediately benefitting many of the people in their production or employment. Nehru certainly appreciated Gandhi's dedication to serve the downtrodden, hungry masses. He also understood that Gandhi's innovation was to take politics to the people. Nehru had once said that what Gandhi accomplished for India was,

a psychological change, almost as if some expert in psychoanalytic methods had probed deep into the patient's past, found out the origins of his complexes, exposed them to his view, and thus rid him of that burden.<sup>4</sup>

It was through Gandhi's association that Jawaharlal Nehru, the Cambridge-educated aristocrat, was able to return to his Indian roots, to take pride in his Indianness, and to relate to the poorer sections of the community. Nehru soon became familiar with the farmers in the field and workers in the factories and came to realize that Gandhi, indeed, represented the peasant class of the country.

Personally Nehru was powerfully attracted to the personality of his older colleague, of whom he eloquently wrote, "A man of the keenest intellect, of fine feeling and good taste, wide vision; very human, and yet essentially the ascetic who has suppressed his passions and emotions, sublimated them and directed them in spiritual channels; a tremendous personality, drawing people to himself like a magnet, and calling out fierce loyalties and attachments."<sup>5</sup> With deep admiration for Gandhi, Nehru became Gandhi's permanent companion and supporter for the rest of his life. Nehru greatly appreciated the political pragmatism of Gandhi, but probably did not share Gandhi's religious moorings nor the idealism of Satyagraha.

For Gandhi himself, his whole life was focused on his philosophy of Satyagraha or holding onto truth. This philosophy of Gandhi had as its ultimate aim the creation of transformed individuals who will serve society in their political and economic life. As a shrewd politician, he knew that the concept of truth is beyond the comprehension of the common person. Precisely for this reason he wanted to make use of certain symbols. It looks as though Gandhi knew humanity's thirst for symbols and acted accordingly. Further, Gandhi had a profound understanding of the connection between his political and social action and the power of symbols. Gandhi was indeed a poet of life, in his choice of symbols, such as, the loin-cloth, the silent Mondays, the famous fasts and the spinning wheel. All these symbols made great sense to a largely illiterate following.

Thus while Gandhi wanted to bring about a revolution with his philosophy of Satyagraha, he knew that he could effectively communicate this message to the masses only by using some meaningful symbols. That Gandhi had chosen such appropriate symbols as the spinning wheel to reconstruct India along traditional cultural ethos is indeed significant. Gandhi certainly did it with a determination, a charisma and creative courage.

### **The Legacy of Satyagraha: Toward a Counter Culture**

Raghavan Iyer, who has written extensively on Gandhi, observes that "Gandhi tended to assimilate all the virtues to that of moral courage."<sup>6</sup> Gandhi certainly possessed the courage to stand alone in all his ventures whether it was in the field of politics or religion. Applying his innovative principle of Satyagraha, Gandhi maintained that Satyagraha with non-violence as the only way to truth, will bring about an effective transformation and a totally new way of thinking about the political, social, and religious dimensions of community life. In effect, Satyagraha has paved the way for a counter culture, a radical revolution for human dignity and human self-respect. Gandhi, indeed, called upon his people to collectively struggle for a life worth living and endow it with purpose and meaning.

For Gandhi, *Satyagraha* was a spiritual discipline based on soul force. In course of time, Gandhi came to view his political work within the context of his spiritual quest. He understood politics in the broadest sense to include all aspects of socio-economic and political life. Gandhi dreamt of a world free from mad mechanization and senseless competition, of a society free from an escalation of exploitation, gluttonous consumerism and violence, and of a community in which moral and ethical values would prevail and where people of various faiths, cultures and traditions would learn to celebrate and respect

all religions and live and work together in harmony and peace.

In a marvellous way, Satyagraha comes very close to the dialogic philosophy of the Jewish scholar Martin Buber, a philosophy of I-Thou, in which Buber argued that every thing and being should be respected as a Thou, as an end itself, and not merely as an It. In the I-It mode, which is characterized by goal-oriented, instrumental attitude, the I relates to others in terms of their use and values. The I calculates and uses the other for his or her own advantage. The I-Thou mode, on the other hand, is characterized by mutuality, openness and spontaneity. It is a true dialogue in which the partners speak to one another as equals. Buber described the I-Thou relation with trees and rocks as well as with cats, horses and human persons. He maintained that "all real living is meeting,"<sup>7</sup> and that the manner in which we relate to nature and fellow human beings determines the quality of our lives.

When violence is applied, it becomes a monologue because the person using violence does not relate to the victim, rather the victim is dehumanized and turned into an object. On the other hand, non-violence is a dialogue, since the opponent is respected and often consulted; the opponent often emerges from the confrontation more humanized than before. Satyagraha breaks the bondage of hatred and does not create new evils. Gandhi's foremost confrontation was in his fight for freedom from the British. There was an elusive open-mindedness in Gandhi's values and ambitions. Gandhi was therefore able to transform the political situation of conflict between these two nations into a dialogue. For all the outward struggle during the independence movement, the result was a harmonious relationship between England and India.

Satyagraha, as Gandhi had spelt it, was not only a philosophy of dialogue, but it also turned out to be a way of the cross. By Satyagraha, Gandhi probably meant something essentially positive, an outgoing of spiritual power and a purification of the soul through suffering. Seeing a crucifix in the Sistine Chapel in 1931, Gandhi confessed, "It was not without a wrench that I could tear myself away from that scene of living tragedy. I saw there at once that nations like individuals could only be made through the agony of the cross and in no other way."<sup>8</sup> With the emphasis on suffering, Gandhi's Satyagraha has given a new insight into the drama of conflict, that its significance is for ever resonating in the hearts of all people aspiring for justice and peace. James Douglass claimed, "Gandhi concentrated his entire life and being on the Christic reality of suffering love," and continued that through his experiments in truth, Gandhi "committed himself to suffering love in such a way that the power of Christ was demonstrated

in terms of a social and political revolution."<sup>9</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and martyr, had summarized both Gandhi's law of life and that of the theology of the cross, "Through love and suffering we enter the All and overcome it. . . . Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of this law of life but the Indian Messiah has given it powerful expression in our time."<sup>10</sup>

Gandhi maintained that faith in God was the basis of Satyagraha. Further, Satyagraha was not only the faith of Gandhi at work but also a means to God-realization. He firmly believed that spiritual and ethical forces can be effective in the political field. Gandhi was both reflective and active, indeed, a sage in revolt. To a century fraught with violence Gandhi offered a weapon of peace, namely, Satyagraha and its ally, non-violence. With the application of his gospel of Satyagraha in the dubious field of politics, Gandhi became an exemplar of soul-force and a rare example of the strengths—and limits—of moral statecraft.

Gandhi was sure that Satyagraha and non-violence ought to be the central *dharma* in Indian ethos and life. He emphatically stated, "I believe that no other path but that of non-violence will suit India. The symbol of that *dharma* for India is the spinning-wheel as it alone is the friend of the distressed and the giver of plenty for the poor."<sup>11</sup> In Gandhi's reckoning, the spinning wheel became not only a symbolical economic reaction, and an aesthetic sign, but also a religious penance. It was probably the spinning wheel that set in motion the counter culture to which Gandhi's Satyagraha was leading the country. Of course, Gandhi himself was not aware that his Satyagraha would lead to a radical revolution and to a counter culture in Indian society. Commenting on this, Robert Payne, in his panoramic biography of Gandhi, remarked:

Future historians will probably regard him as one of those rare men who come at the end of historical epochs and by their very presence announce the beginning of a new dispensation, though they are not themselves permitted to see the promised land.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Spinning Wheel: Gandhian Symbol par Excellence**

Of all the symbols that Gandhi used, the spinning wheel was the most dramatic. Gandhi saw in the spinning wheel an economic tool for the restoration of the prosperity of Indian handicrafts. Writing on the spinning wheel, Judith Brown remarked, "It was of course an aspect of his rejection of the economics of Western civilization, but its benefits in Gandhi's eyes were far more specific in the work for

swaraj.”<sup>13</sup> Gandhi’s penetrating insight into the dehumanizing effects of economic systems, political structures and religious institutions was remarkable. The spinning wheel pitted against the great twentieth century machines, was a message to the whole nation to be self-reliant, to take pride in manual labour and to learn to work out their own liberation.

Gandhi reiterated, “I have compared spinning to the central sun and the other village crafts to the various constellations in the solar system. The former gives light and warmth to the latter and sustains them. Without it they will not be able to exist.”<sup>14</sup> To an American friend, who asked whether Western followers of Gandhi should “preach and practice the spinning wheel,” Gandhi replied with an emphatic “No” and continued that the message of the spinning wheel “is one of simplicity, service of mankind, living so as not to hurt others, creating an indissoluble bond between the rich and the poor, capital and labour, the prince and the peasant.”<sup>15</sup> Gandhi often maintained that the spinning wheel is the symbol of the nation’s prosperity. Further, Gandhi confidently remarked, “Khadi to me is the symbol of unity of Indian community, of its economic freedom and equality and, therefore, ultimately, in the poetic expression of Jawaharlal Nehru, ‘the livery of India’s freedom’.”<sup>16</sup>

With the spinning wheel Gandhi was almost initiating a revolution which while questioning the materialism of the West, was also able to provide an alternative, namely, a society based on the principles of Satyagraha and non-violence. Here was an appropriate indigenous tool on which to build a cultural identity for a modernising programme such as national regeneration. The spinning wheel besides changing the whole connotation of technology, also embodied within itself a holistic view of reality. One can highlight at least three dimensions of the spinning wheel, namely the economic, the aesthetic and the spiritual.

### **The Economic Dimension of the Spinning Wheel**

Gandhi’s economic ideas were formulated amidst the social conditions in India at a time when Britain through its political power was gradually destroying Indian local industries. Before the British came, India had engaged itself in several cottage industries and had trade relations and commerce with other nations. The latter part of the eighteenth century saw the rise of industrial revolution in the West. And the politically dominant Britain, destined to govern and subdue, took the bold step of carrying the raw materials from India to provide a fillip to its own manufacturers. The finished products were shipped back to India to fetch fabulous prices here. It mattered very little to

many people in India that an ancient village economy was destroyed by a deluge of machine-made cotton goods from Lancaster, that millions of Indian spinners and weavers were dispossessed and ruined. It was a bizarre fact of Imperial ingenuity that the British not only conquered India with mainly Indian soldiers but actually obliged the Indians to pay for this paradoxical privilege.

It was precisely in this context that Gandhi began to feel strongly that this situation could be remedied only by reviving India's village craft and cotton goods. Gandhi emphasized, "I feel convinced that the revival of hand-spinning and hand-weaving will make the largest contribution to the economic and the moral regeneration of India."<sup>17</sup> On the merits of the spinning wheel and the *khadi*, Brown points out, "Plying the wheel regularly and wearing *khadi* would break the barriers of caste, community and the educational level... More obviously, *khadi* would alleviate unemployment, prevent idleness and bring help to the very poor, while undermining... the profits of cotton exporters."<sup>18</sup> Calling Gandhi a prophet in his own country, Erik H. Erikson, the noted psychoanalyst, continued, "He was soon to elevate the spinning wheel to significance as an economic necessity, a religious ritual and a national symbol."<sup>19</sup>

By reading Tolstoy and Ruskin as well as Hindu texts, Gandhi developed the conviction that human nature could blossom only in small-scale organic communities bound by common ties of commitment, vision and service. Gandhi envisioned these communities to be free from superstition, exploitation and scarcity, and to form an oceanic, ever-widening, never-ascending, circle of agrarian communities where each will have autonomy and yet related to one another. In Gandhi's words:

But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance, but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units.<sup>20</sup>

While Nehru thought that the villages were intellectually and culturally backward, Gandhi believed that he could begin with villages, and try to enrich the traditional way of life by the use of labour-intensive manufacture and handicrafts. According to Erikson, Gandhi's spinning wheel "was also a symbol of a lost and regained identity."<sup>21</sup> In Gandhi's view, if the villagers can have access to education in all matters, social and political, then the villages which were dung heaps will soon blossom into "tiny gardens of Eden." Gandhi ended with the hope:

When our villages are fully developed, there will be no dearth in them of men with a high degree of skill and artistic talent. There will be village poets, village artists, village architects, linguists, and research workers. In short, there will be nothing in life worth having which will not be had in the villages.<sup>22</sup>

In order to restructure villages, Gandhi spelt out several measures. Gandhi's cardinal principles were simplicity and smallness. He, therefore, advocated voluntary simplicity, bread labour, trusteeship, decentralization and a culture of non-violence as essential elements toward an economics of self-reliance, self-sufficiency and self-efficiency. For Gandhi, the supreme consideration was the human person and he strongly insisted that people's humanity has to be preserved and protected against the onslaught of the machine mentality driven by an overweening profit motive.

In contemporary times, many environment scholars point out that Gandhian ideals of decentralization, appropriate technology, non-materialism and non-violence are of immense significance to environmental concerns. In their view, Gandhi was probably the first to realize that one of the reasons for global crisis is the unsustainable use of the Earth's resources. Though concern for the environment was not the focus of Gandhi's prescriptions, yet it is believed that such strategy can help to minimize the degradation of our environment.

### The Aesthetic Dimension

During his life time, Gandhi was a fascinating subject for artists and cartoonists. One of the most interesting and well-published cartoon showed Gandhi playing music with the spinning wheel as his violin. It is indeed true that Gandhi's aesthetic mind was able to find a rhythm in the regular hum of the *charkha* and he often referred to the art and music of the spinning wheel. The music that came out of the spinning wheel was for Gandhi the music of freedom for the nation and of liberation of the Indian labourers and artisans.

It was Gandhi's aesthetic approach to politics that appealed to many of Gandhi's friends including Nehru. An innovative and courageous trait that Gandhi developed over the years relates to his profound understanding of the relation between political action and the power of art, and between political philosophy and the philosophy of aesthetics. In Gandhi's view, anyone involved in the politics of Satyagraha, has to experience something analogous to what the artist experiences in the art of creating. In Gandhi's political philosophy, factors such as action, experience, thought, symbols, and aesthetics should all come together.

Of the many civil disobedience movements that Gandhi had organized, none was so dramatic and creative as the famous Salt March, India's *Via Dolorosa*, to freedom, which eventually loosened the British grip on India and united the nation. On that eventful morning on March 12, 1930, the whole of India was bustling with curiosity and excitement. When Gandhi walked to the sea at Dandi and scooped out a handful of salt, it was a signal to the whole country. And all over India, people began to march to the nearest seashore where salt could be made. Without the use of mass media such as the radio or television, Gandhi had communicated to the whole nation effectively. Writing on the drama at the seashore, Gandhi's biographer, Louis Fischer, remarked that "to pick up a pinch of salt in publicized defiance of the mighty Government, required imagination, dignity and the sense of showmanship of a great artist."<sup>23</sup>

In the year 1924, Gandhi's English friend Charles Andrews introduced to Gandhi his young student G. Ramachandran. As a student from Shantiniketan, Ramachandran had great admiration for Rabindranath Tagore and wondered if Gandhi had any interest in the aesthetic sensibilities of the human person. Gandhi was quick to answer that in Art, he distinguished between the inner spirit and the outer expression. The inner spirit, the inner feeling that the artist experienced was for him more significant than the external form of art—figures, line or sketches. Gandhi concluded, "All true Art is thus the expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only in so far as they are the expression of the inner spirit of man."<sup>24</sup>

The discussion soon turned to the relation between truth and beauty. Gandhi maintained, "I see and find Beauty in truth or through Truth. All Truths, not merely true ideas, but truthful faces, truthful pictures or songs, are highly beautiful . . . Whenever men begin to see Beauty in Truth, then true Art will arise." Ramachandran wanted to know whether there is truth in things neither moral or immoral in themselves, as for example "a sunset or a crescent moon that shines amid the stars at night." Gandhi eagerly replied:

Indeed these beauties are truthful, inasmuch as they make me think of the Creator at the back of them. How else could these be beautiful but for the Truth that is in the centre of creation? When I admire the wonder of a sunset or the beauty of the moon my soul expands in worship of the Creator. I try to see Him and His mercies in all these creations.<sup>25</sup>

The famous debate between Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Laureate, in the 1920s dealt with the relation between aesthetics and political action. Tagore, the poet, entertained a view of art as pure enjoyment of beauty and way apart from the ordeals of



political action. For Gandhi, himself, each symbol became a sermon in action. It is not surprising that Tagore, Gandhi's friend and critic, took strong exception to Gandhi's non-cooperation movement, especially the *charkha* with its mandate to spin and the symbolic burning of foreign cloth. Gandhi replied that what led him to adopt these symbols was precisely their aesthetic power to symbolize the plight of the poor and the importance of self-reliance.

The spinning wheel seems to have aroused the aesthetic sensibilities in Gandhi and he would often draw on the truth, goodness, beauty and the unity of the spinning wheel. It was probably this pursuit of truth and goodness that led Gandhi to an artistry in life. The spinning wheel became the true language of cosmic adoration. Writing on the national products such as *khadi*, Gandhi remarked, "The products of the spinning wheel, being Indian rather than foreign, should have a particular beauty in the eyes of anyone who loved the Indian nation."<sup>26</sup>

In December 1931, Gandhi visited Romain Rolland, in Villanueva, overlooking a lake in Switzerland. Rolland, a pacifist exiled from his native land, had already written in his biography, on the "whole expression of infinite patience and infinite love," of the "man who has shaken the foundations of the British Empire, and who introduced into human politics the strongest religious impulse."<sup>27</sup> Gandhi and Rolland shared many friends, including Charles Andrews and Rabindranath Tagore. Now they were able to discuss many common areas of interest such as the role of art. Rolland was immensely pleased with Gandhi's view that art should spring forth from truth and that it was a necessary adjunct to political action. On the last day of his visit, Gandhi asked his host to play something from Beethoven. Robert Payne reports, "Accordingly, Romain Rolland sat down at the piano and played the tender, dream-like *andante* of the Fifth Symphony, following it with the Dance of the Blessed Spirits from Gluck's *Orpheus et Eurydice*."<sup>28</sup>

### Spiritual Dimension

If theology is defined as the systematic disclosure concerning God and God's ways with the world, then we can say that the *charkha* spun a theology for Gandhi. He often said that we can commune with God through the spinning wheel. Writing to the ashram women, Gandhi remarked, "Anyone who desires to see God today may see Him in the form of the spinning wheel."<sup>29</sup> In his letter to Durga Desai in 1931, Gandhi explained, "God no doubt is the sole help of the poor, but the spinning wheel is His hands and feet, and the poor man or woman who holds it holds God."<sup>30</sup> In Gandhi's view, spinning meant

an identification with the poor and thereby discovering God. He openly declared that spinning is a means of "daily coming near the poorest of the poor, and to that extent to God."<sup>31</sup> Gandhi identified God as *Darīdranarayan*, the God of the poor and often advised the people, "Spin in the name of God and spin for the poor of the land."<sup>32</sup>

The spinning wheel provided Gandhi with a theology of Sabbath because in Gandhi's words, spinning was a restful activity "imitating God's own active rest and restful action."<sup>33</sup> In the Judeo-Christian tradition, Sabbath is a day of rest each week after six days of work. The term Sabbath derives from the Hebrew *shavat*, (to cease). However, according to both Jewish and Christian scholars, Sabbath is also the time to celebrate the creative work of God, after which God Himself rested. In fact, Sabbath is a day of spiritual and physical refreshment. Gandhi exhorted his people, "Take to spinning [to find peace of mind]. The music of the spinning wheel will be as balm to your soul."<sup>34</sup>

Gandhi also looked upon the spinning wheel as a sacrament of salvation in the concrete historical context. John Haynes Holmes, an American clergy, who had developed a great respect for Gandhi and his work, claims that the Khaddar cap, "like the cross yesterday, is a spiritual symbol—the symbol of Gandhian triumph over the sword, of his disciples' promise of fidelity to him and of the victory of freedom which waits upon their cause."<sup>35</sup> In Christian belief and practice, a sacrament is a rite that mediates grace, constituting a sacred mystery. The root meaning of the Latin word *sacramentum* is to "make sacred". Gandhi openly acknowledged,

I have described my spinning as a penance or sacrament. And, since I believe that where there is pure and active love for the poor, there is God also. I see God in every thread that I draw on the spinning wheel.<sup>36</sup>

In Hinduism, a sacrament involves sacrifice, ritual washing and Vedic recitals. It seems that Gandhi used the word sacrament in the Christian sense, since he often spoke of penance and prayer. In Christianity, a sacrament such as baptism, penance or eucharist is taken to be an outward sign that conveys an inward, spiritual grace from God. Gandhi reiterated, "Every revolution of the wheel spins peace, goodwill and love,"<sup>37</sup> and he was confident that in the quiet of the spinning wheel, a person can find healing power, a sacramental presence and an experience of joy and peace. For Gandhi himself the *charkha* became the gateway to spiritual salvation.

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# Sending the Protest Message

*Jørgen Johansen  
Brian Martin*

**W**HAT MAKES A protest action effective? Organisers have lots of potential choices: what, when, where, how and who. Looking at how audiences are likely to respond to messages can give guidance.

Heads of government are coming to town. Let's organise a protest! We'll have a massive rally and march. Those who want to can blockade the venue. We'll make our concerns about inequality, exploitation and aggression known far and wide.

But wait a second! Is this sort of protest going to be effective? Is it going to change people's viewpoints, mobilise support and help bring about a better society? Or, instead, will it enforce prejudices, alienate potential supporters and suck energy away from more effective initiatives? And anyway what does it mean to "be effective"?

There are no simple answers to these questions. Actions have many different impacts. Many are hard to measure and some are entirely overlooked. Weighing up the pros and cons is difficult: it's an emotional as well as a rational matter.

## Context

Actions need to be designed with the context in mind. What is appropriate in one situation could be completely counterproductive in another. Laws, media, police, culture, religion, civil society and many other factors are very different in Burkina Faso, Germany, Nepal, Indonesia, and China.

In India, in 1930, Gandhi chose to build a campaign around salt, a potent symbol for Indians because of the British salt laws. What

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could protesters use as a potent symbol in Swaziland or Sweden today?

Actions must be designed with a deep knowledge of the local conditions. As a general rule, success stories should never be copied, but they can function as inspirations and as useful cases from which to learn.

Open-ended hunger strikes are regarded very differently in a Christian culture than in a Hindu society. For atheists and Christians it means a lot to sacrifice your life, whereas a Hindu anticipates thousands more lives to come — an important difference!

In a country where an activist risks torture, lengthy imprisonment or the death penalty, civil disobedience is a different matter than where the likely outcome is a fine or a few weeks in a decent prison. It is wise for activists to act differently in countries with strict censorship and state-run media than where free and oppositional media regularly cover demonstrations.

### Choices

There are two main types of actions: (1) oppose and (2) promote. The first focuses on what you disagree with and the other on your alternative. Within each of these there are many options. In most cases, it's much easier to create a positive image when you have an alternative. To say '*no*' is common and easy, but it will often be regarded as unhelpful, as blocking progress. To present alternatives is more demanding, but often rewarded by being seen as constructive.

Within each of these main categories there is again a choice to be made: direct action or indirect action. By direct action we mean to 'do something about the problem/conflict' ourselves. It could be to close a city street to change it into a space for pedestrians. Or it could be to squat in a house and turn it into a cultural centre. When the activists in Genetix Snowball destroy genetically modified plants from fields in Britain they are not only demanding that these fields should be made illegal but are removing them themselves.<sup>1</sup> These types of actions are often illegal and risky. The point here is that the activists themselves are making the change directly: they are taking direct action.

Indirect actions involve asking someone else, such as politicians or business executives, to respond to a demand or deal with an unjust situation. In many countries you need permission from the local police to have a demonstration and sometimes they will be helpful in keeping calm during the demo. These types of actions are dependent on sympathy from someone else in order to be successful. If neither power holders nor the public support your demands you will not

achieve what you want.

Note that in a dictatorship, making requests can be a form of direct action, because it is an exercise of free speech.

For both direct and indirect actions there is a need to develop more types of actions. Creativity, fantasy and experiments are crucial. Just as arms producers come up with more sophisticated weapons every year, activists need to develop new forms of action. Good examples should be tested, documented and adapted for use at other times, places and circumstances.

A third form of action has become popular in recent decades in some countries: pay an annual fee to professionals who act on your behalf. Greenpeace, for example, takes on such activities. It is run as a business, without any membership or local group democracy. Greenpeace asks people to donate money to its activities and then spends the income on research, lobbying and actions of many kinds. When Greenpeace does popular and effective actions it receives more money from supporters and can do more work. This sort of "proxy activism" has considerable support among middle aged, middle class people throughout the western world.

Paying proxy activists might be seen as supporting groups to do specialist actions, like sailing boats or climbing buildings, while others do what they can, like writing letters or joining boycotts. It is possible for individuals to financially support such groups while participating in other groups. It is hard to determine whether proxy activist groups are stimulating or reducing involvement in participative movements.

### **Some basic questions**

There are several important choices in taking action.

- What is the issue? It might be corporate globalisation, violence against women, genetic engineering or militarism.
- What are the core elements of the issue? For genetically modified food, a core element might be health risks, with other issues being promotion of sustainable agriculture or citizen participation in decision-making.
- What is the occasion? It might be an event such as an arms fair, an international celebration like May Day or an ongoing issue like sex slavery.
- Would it be better to arrange the event at another, better time?
- Are the issues well known, or is it wise to have an "educational campaign" first?
- What is the main target group we want to influence?
- Would it be wise to build an alliance with other groups and organise the event together? If so, which groups and organisations would be appropriate for such a cooperation?

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- What sort of action should be organised? There are many options, such as a rally, march, strike, boycott, sabotage or vigil. Is it safe or risky? Which types of actions will have best effect in this specific case?
- Where and when?
- Who is involved? Is the protest restricted to a few or built around broad participation? Who is involved in planning and running the action?
- Do we have a good follow-up plan for unexpected incidents?
- How can we expect the authorities to react?
- What are the likely reactions from those the action is directed towards?
- What are the likely reactions from different media? Can we improve media coverage by designing the action differently?
- How will members of the general public react?

There's a lot to consider. Activists need to spend time discussing what they want to achieve, and how. There are bound to be disagreements, because different activists have different motivations and goals.

To get a handle on basic questions, it's useful to look at the potential audiences of an action.

### Audiences

On many issues there are three main groups: activists, opponents and third parties. When a group wants to challenge a repressive government, the activists are those involved in protests. The opponents are the government and its agencies such as the police and the army. The third parties are those not directly involved in the struggle: the general public and most people in other countries. People can move from being a third party to being an activist, and the other way around, as a consequence of actions. One goal is to engage more people. In most cases the media are carriers of information/propaganda and messages from the event to wider audiences.

As well as looking at who the audiences are, it's helpful to look at the interaction between activist methods and audiences.<sup>2</sup>

#### *1. Persuading the opponent*

Leaflets, articles, banners, graffiti, delegations, public meetings, websites, emails — lots of the methods regularly used by activists are designed to persuade opponents using evidence, arguments and a demonstration of commitment. Of course nothing will persuade some opponents, such as the ruler of a repressive regime. But others, such as troops, might be convinced by appropriate materials,

especially if they were misled or coerced into their positions.

We cannot expect soldiers, judges or police to change immediately, but there are several examples of actions influencing their attitudes so that over time they shift sides. An illegal vigil against a planned nuclear waste repository in Sweden lasted more than 19 years. Many local policemen, whose job was to arrest protesters, some years later decided to join their ranks. On one of the annual meetings of the campaign, the local police choir entertained the activists with their songs.

It is important to remember that police, soldiers, politicians and others who are regarded as opponents have more than one role in life. A policewoman can also have roles as football player, mother, politician, friend, neighbour and lover. She may be difficult to persuade while in her police role but will be easier to reach through some of the other roles.

A well constructed action should try to reach more than one of the roles. On 5 October 2000, Serbian soldiers guarding the parliament building in Belgrade were ordered to shoot at the masses trying to occupy the building. The soldiers did not respond, in part because many of them were also fathers of young activists in the crowd. They knew this in advance and, while they stood on the stairs at the main entrance, they were reminded of it by the activists in the front of the crowd.

For persuasion it is probably better to focus on constructive actions and presenting reliable alternatives as well as protesting against what is regarded harmful. Blockades of nuclear power stations worldwide in the past several decades have been complemented by efforts to insulate houses, build wind power, reduce energy consumption and prove that it is cheaper and safer to save energy rather than produce more. Activists can both oppose the bad and promote alternatives.

## *2. Coercing the opponent*

Strikes, boycotts, social ostracism, fasts, sabotage, blockades — these put pressure on opponents, without necessarily persuading them. If these methods are successful, they cause the opponent to begin to change, perhaps by instituting reforms or by opening dialogue with challengers.

Activists planning such actions should consider the short and long term. Sometimes a short term victory can result in a worse situation later; sometimes a short term loss can be beneficial in the long term. The Clamshell Alliance's 1978 blockade against the Seabrook nuclear power plant in New Hampshire was an inspiration for future actions against nuclear power worldwide and therefore should be counted

as successful even though the plant was completed. Subsequent large scale protests contributed to the lack of interest in building more nuclear power in the West in later decades.

Methods to coerce the opponent were central in the strategy used by the trade union movement Solidarity in its struggle against the communist dictatorship in Poland from 1980-1989.<sup>3</sup> Solidarity was the first movement within the East European bloc to successfully remove a communist regime.

### *3. Winning over third parties*

All these methods can be used to gain support from individuals and groups not directly involved in the struggle. These so-called third parties can exert enormous influence. For example, in the international campaign against apartheid in South Africa, solidarity groups in other countries pressured international corporations to withdraw investments in the country. Sometimes there's a long chain of influence.<sup>4</sup> Black activists in South Africa tried to persuade local church people to support the anti-apartheid struggle. South African church figures appealed to their counterparts in other countries; who in turn supported the disinvestment efforts and used personal connections within their own governments.<sup>5</sup>

The media play a key role in winning over third parties. Activists often hope the mass media will report on their initiatives, making them known to non-participants who may be inspired to support or join the campaign. Workers in the mass media, including journalists and editors, are themselves third parties as well as serving as a channel to other third parties. However, sometimes coverage declines over time as protest becomes routine and is treated as "old news." Protesters, to attract continuing media interest, may escalate their actions, attracting attention through novelty, disruption and violence, sometimes leading to more negative coverage and at the expense of participation and solidarity. This is a common dilemma when activists perform for the mass media.<sup>6</sup>

Some forms of media, such as the telephone, websites and blogs, can be used directly, without any intermediaries. Excellent examples of good media coverage are the actions by Greenpeace against air pollution. The first time activists climbed up a chimney and unfurled a banner with words like "Toxic Crime" they received enormous attention. Television and newspapers all over the place reported on this spectacular action and it was impossible to cover such an action without having the message up front. So a huge audience got the message into their living rooms. This was the perfect balance between being spectacular and having the message in focus. The third party

was reached and influenced. This helped people to understand air pollution as a social problem.

To reach a third party through media is not easy. Many actions are either so spectacular that the media focus only on the amazing aspects or so boring that they don't care to cover it at all. When Greenpeace climb up chimney number 300 it is not the same effect as the first time. Maybe the local media will turn up, but CNN gets tired after a handful of similar actions. There is a need for creativity.

One vexing factor, for those who want to disseminate their message through mainstream media, is violence. When there are violent confrontations, even if they involve only a few individuals out of thousands of protesters, you can bet the media will highlight the clashes. It doesn't matter "who started", the confrontation — police, provocateurs, protesters or counter-protesters — because violence inevitably grabs media attention. Hence, in planning an action, it is wise to minimise possibilities for violence. Specific exercises to eliminate violent individuals and tactical planning for reducing the effect of violent incidents are helpful.

Different people perceive violence in different ways. Civil disobedience aimed at damaging a missile will be seen differently from actions like throwing bricks through windows or at police.

Sometimes, when police use violence against protesters, this generates greater opposition. When in 1988, the opposition in Chile campaigned against an eight-year extension of Pinochet's presidential term, they were allowed 15 minutes a day on national TV. Most of that time they used to show police violence and the reaction was that more activists took part in the demonstrations. In interviews later it became clear that the courage by the activists and the brutality of the police resulted in more people daring to engage in the campaign. And the opposition won!

#### *4. Building solidarity among activists*

Activists are themselves an important audience. A public meeting or a rally can be an occasion for activists to meet each other, share information and build stronger bonds. Even if no one else knows about the action, it can be worthwhile in forging greater commitment. If the action is designed appropriately, the number of participants is not the most important thing.

Many types of actions serve both as a protest and a form of community building. Squatting, occupations and other long-term actions are like education. Afghan refugees built a tent camp outside the Norwegian parliament in July 2007. They had not been granted permission to stay in Norway, and in addition to using the tent camp

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as a site for a visible protest in front of the decision makers, they arranged a "Refugee Academy" with lecturers from Oslo University and other places to teach relevant topics on a daily basis. Through this academy, the refugees and their supporters were raising awareness, gaining more knowledge, and building useful skills and networks.

Linking with groups and movements globally is easier today than ever before. Electronic communication makes it cheap, easy and interesting to hook into global networks. Through Skype, Facebook, chat rooms and web-based communities more people can have personal friends from other continents than ever before.

### *5. Building personal commitment*

Activists are individuals, with the usual range of hopes, anxieties, personal troubles and flashes of exhilaration. Communicating to the individual in a way that deepens understanding and commitment is crucially important. A cartoon, a ritual, a vigil or a few well chosen words can make a big difference to the way a person feels and hence to their future involvement.

Activists from previous generations have learned a lot about barriers to commitment, such as working too hard and trying to achieve too much — leading to burnout — making others feel guilty for not doing enough (guilt-tripping) and clashing with other activists rather than working together toward common goals. Communicating within groups, between groups and in actions needs to build on these sorts of insights.

Finding a good balance between different audiences is not easy. In the urgency to mobilise a really big rally, for example, the result might be mass action where people feel anonymous, with limited capacity for building solidarity and personal commitment. On the other hand, a small intimate action might have limited capacity to reach out to third parties.

Since the 1970s there has been a tradition within several social movements to include training and preparation for activists. Parts of the Plowshare movement spend years preparing for a single disarmament action. They risk years in prison. A lot of preparation is needed for the activist as well as family and friends for a new type of life.

Within the globalisation-critical movement there has been a move towards greater preparation. How to handle police violence? What to do if fellow activists start throwing stones? What are your rights in case of arrest? Which lawyers can you call for assistance? Who will call your family and employer in case police detain you for several

days? These and other issues are discussed and trained for.

Within several movements there is also a requirement that the participants in actions have a certain level of knowledge about the protest issue. Study circles and workshops are obligatory prior to any action. The same is done with sessions on how to handle media. Role plays in being interviewed are carried out and sometimes recorded on video in order for the activists to develop awareness about their body language, voice and general presentation.

A growing number of organisations and movements take evaluations more seriously. After actions the participants go through what happened and discuss what went well and what could be improved. The whole process, from the first idea to the last phase, is documented and can then be used for future activities.

All these elements in an action serve to educate, create commitment and in general help participants to grow as human beings.

### **Alignment**

Media guru Marshall McLuhan said "The medium is the message." For example, television encourages a certain way of viewing the world, irrespective of what's on the screen. Personal conversation encourages a different perspective.

In activism, too, the medium — namely the method of action — is the message. According to a perspective in psychology called correspondent inference theory, audiences make assumptions about someone's motivations according to the consequences of the actions they take.<sup>7</sup> When activists threaten or use violence — for example, bombings, assassinations or hijackings — many observers believe the goal of the activists is to destroy society. The method, namely destruction, is assumed to reflect the goal. For example, after 9/11, many people in the US thought al Qaeda's goal was to destroy US society. This was the wrong message. Very few US citizens knew that Osama bin Laden's key goals concerned US government policies in the Muslim world.

The same thing applies on a much smaller scale. If a worker on a picket spits on a manager, the message is one of contempt and disrespect, which can distract audiences from the message that the pay is too low or working conditions are unsafe.

Actions are more powerful when the method used — the medium — is aligned with the message. In the US civil rights movement, well-dressed blacks entered white-only restaurants and sat politely and quietly at lunch counters, not responding to abuse and police provocation. Their presence and respectful demeanour sent a powerful message that was aligned with the short-term goal, equal

access to the restaurant, as well as the long-term goal of racial equality. On the other hand, the abuse by white patrons and aggressive action by police, directed only at blacks in the restaurant, sent the message that segregation was a system of racism, exclusion and aggression. These powerful messages helped discredit segregation among audiences in the rest of the US and the world.

Gandhi, as well as pioneering the use of strategic nonviolent action, also promoted the "constructive programme." This was developed partly as a reaction to some of the negative reactions to his early non-cooperation actions but also because he saw the need for more self-discipline among his fellow activists. The main idea is to start building islands of the future society here and now rather than wait until the whole society has changed. A key goal was to build a structure that made the movement and the people less dependent of external support. The khadi campaign, with participants spinning, weaving and sewing their own clothes, was started in order to be self-sufficient, with no need to buy British textiles.

A more modern example is to cultivate your own food. Not being dependent on large scale farming companies, long-distance transport, artificial fertilizers and pesticides sends a more positive message than destroying fields with GM crops.

The self-discipline part of the constructive program in India included meditation, daily exercises, honesty, "non possession", eating habits, celibacy and other rules for the individual. Such rules are seldom practised within movements today. But many activists have taken up several of these norms in their private life. Movements to change lifestyles are integrated in the more pragmatic political movements within global civil society.

But here, as for other strategies, there is a need for balance. Extremists of all sorts have difficulties in being accepted, regarded as models and listened to by those outside a movement's inner circle. Visual attributes such as dress, hairstyle, car and house will affect how the message is received. Speakers and representatives should be chosen for their rapport with audiences. Different dress, language and style may be needed depending on whether the audience is farmers, nurses or generals.

Sometimes it is important for activists to make a statement about their own identity and styles. You don't always have to adapt to what is expected, but it is worth considering these effects. In any action and campaign there are many functions to be filled and visual appearance often affects the results.

In many movements today, external funding is a challenging issue. The so-called colour revolutions in recent years — nonviolent regime

changes such as the orange revolution in Ukraine and the cedar revolution in Lebanon — have been financially assisted by US and other governments and a number of private institutions. Critics claim that US funding means US government agendas are served. Others, however, say these events are much more complex than just a question of money: if US dollars determined outcomes, there would be a colour revolution against every regime unfriendly to the US government, and this hasn't happened.

Although external funding can assist a movement, it is better to be self-financed. This makes a movement less vulnerable to influence from actors with different agendas, and alignment is better: "the money is the message."

### **Dealing with attack**

Protesters often come under attack: they may be slandered, harassed, beaten, arrested, imprisoned, even killed. Their communications may be intercepted, their offices raided and their equipment confiscated or destroyed. These attacks are hurtful and expensive, damaging to morale and can discourage participation. But with the right preparation and tactics, and good luck, some attacks can be made to backfire on the attackers.<sup>8</sup> It's not easy and doesn't happen often but it can be very powerful.

Perpetrators and their supporters regularly use five methods to inhibit outrage from their attacks:

- cover up the attack
- devalue the target
- reinterpret what happened (including lying, minimising effects and blaming others)
- use official channels to give an appearance of justice
- intimidate and bribe targets and their supporters.

For example, after police assault protesters, the police and their supporters may use every one of these five methods.

- Police, in assaulting protesters, often try to do it away from witnesses and cameras.
- Police, politicians and commentators denigrate protesters as being unprincipled, foul-mouthed, ill-behaved brats, rent-a-crowd (professional protesters), thugs, scum, criminals or terrorists.
- They claim that police were doing their duty, that protesters were violent and disturbing the peace and indeed that it was the police who came under attack.
- When protesters make formal complaints or go to court, seldom are



there any serious consequences for abusive police. Meanwhile, the whole process takes so long that most people lose interest while activists are tied up in technicalities and distracted from activism.

- In many cases protesters don't speak out for fear of police reprisals; in a court action they may accept a settlement to resolve the matter, often with a silencing clause attached.

Each of the five methods can be challenged.

### ***1. Expose attacks***

Solid, reputable, vivid documentation can powerfully expose injustices, overcoming attempts at cover-up.

On 12 November 1991, Indonesian troops opened fire on protesters in a funeral march in Dili, the capital of Indonesian-occupied East Timor. Previous massacres had been hidden from the world, but the Dili massacre was witnessed by western journalists, photographed and videotaped. This documentation led to a huge increase in international support for East Timor's independence. The massacre completely backfired on the Indonesian government.

In 2004, digital photos were published showing US guards torturing and abusing Iraqis held in Abu Ghraib prison. This documentation led to a large backlash against the US occupation of Iraq.

In planning a protest, activists should imagine ways they might be attacked, and plan to expose them. Will police beat protesters with batons? Then have lots of cameras ready to record the beatings. Will police try to confiscate the cameras? Then have observers at a distance with telephoto lenses. Will police use rubber bullets? Then collect some and show the media they are steel bullets with a thin rubber cover. Will police use pepper spray, which doesn't look so bad but can be incredibly painful? Then have medical experts ready to testify about the effects. Present evidence of the attack to the media if they don't have journalists present themselves. Are the mass media likely to record and report police abuses? If not, be ready to post stories and pictures on independent media. Modern equipment can record and send pictures and sound online in real time to a server elsewhere in town. Posters on public places, leaflets at workplaces, and small notes glued to supermarket items also can be effective.

Being prepared to expose attacks is a powerful deterrent to being attacked in the first place. And this effect will grow every time you have been successful in distributing reliable documents on police violence and other forms of attacks.

At the demonstrations at the large summits in recent years, small groups have tried to protect themselves against police brutality by

wearing large helmets, layers of polyester, car tyres and a variety of sports equipment to protect against blows from batons and sticks. Such a strategy can reduce pain but will also reduce the backfire effect — if protesters look like they're ready for violence, then violence against them won't seem so shocking. This is a dilemma for those who want to participate but don't want to be hurt.

## **2. Validate the target**

The attackers are likely to try to devalue the protesters, before, during or after an event.

The September 11 attacks provided an opportunity to devalue protesters of all kinds. Authorities in the US and elsewhere introduced the expression "low level terrorism," verbally associating civil society actors with the common image of brutal, violent, aggressive, dangerous and fanatical terrorists. In Russia, President Putin introduced laws aiming at controlling the civil society. His argument is that opponents are "anti-nationalists." He frequently applies the term "terrorist activities" to critics of his war in Chechnya.

Devaluation can be challenged by sending a positive image through behaviour and appearance, by providing information about backgrounds, beliefs and commitments, and by having valued allies. For example, war veterans, because they have demonstrated their patriotism; are especially credible in opposing wars such as in Vietnam or Iraq. Relatives of victims of the 9/11 attacks are especially credible opponents of the war on terror.

If protesters are well dressed, polite and cheerful, this sends a strong message countering claims they are scruffy, abusive and negative. If protesters circulate information about their commitment to social justice and their involvement in worthy causes, this helps counter claims that they are mindless rebels. If prominent and respected individuals — such as church leaders, lawyers and artists — speak out in support of protesters, this counters claims that they are worthless and unrepresentative.

In the 1986 people-power revolution against Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos, hundreds of thousands of people joined protests in the capital Manila. At the front of the protest, facing troops, were Catholic nuns. The nuns could not easily be perceived as radicals or subversives. Their presence deterred troops from attacking the crowd.

A similar effect can be achieved by having famous people leading a demonstration. Pop stars, sports heroes, prominent politicians, religious leaders, and other famous individuals will help to validate the demonstration. Imagine the Pope and top level imams from Sunni and Shia communities standing hand in hand with Nelson Mandela,

subcommandante Marcos, the Dalai Lama and Paul McCartney. Who would use and justify teargas against them?

Another strategy is to dress like a clown, Santa Claus or Mickey Mouse. Few would like to see Santa beaten, so if the police are brutal they will damage their own reputation.

### ***3. Interpret the attacks as unjust***

The attackers are likely to claim that their actions are justified, that any negative consequences were not very great, and that someone else was responsible for the abuses. Protesters need to be ready with good arguments that highlight the injustice involved and assign responsibility with precision...

Arguments need to be combined with documentation of the whole process. Having reliable and trustworthy witnesses is a good option.

If police say only a few protesters received minor injuries, a statement by doctors or photographs can support a different interpretation. If police say they were following procedures, an extract from their manual juxtaposed with testimony or photos showing something different can be powerful. If government officials blame a few rogue police for assaults, then leaked documents about government planning may expose this to be false.

### ***4. Mobilise support and avoid official channels.***

Complaint procedures, commissions of inquiry, courts and other official channels can soak up an enormous amount of time, money and energy with little positive outcome. They are oriented to technicalities rather than social justice. They privilege the role of experts, for example lawyers, at the expense of popular participation. Rather than being tempted to gain justice through such channels, it's usually better to mobilise support through publicity and campaigning.

Instead of going to court, it can be better to go to the "court of public opinion" by writing articles, posting blogs, producing films and giving talks, and using these to encourage more involvement and carry out new actions.

Sometimes official channels can't be avoided, or can be turned against the attackers. When McDonald's sued activists in the anarchist group London Greenpeace over the leaflet "What's wrong with McDonald's?", two of those targeted, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, decided to resist. They mounted a legal defence. Although Steel and Morris lost in court on some points, McDonald's suffered massive damage to its image due to the public campaign by supporters of Steel and Morris, including circulation of information, rallies, pickets, and a website ([www.mcspotlight.org](http://www.mcspotlight.org)).

In 1983, a small pacifist journal in Norway was accused of espionage for publishing a series of articles on secret US military installations. Membership files, documents and a lot of irrelevant information were taken in a police raid against the editorial office and the activists' private homes. Years of trials followed, with the editors eventually found not guilty by a three-to-two vote in the Supreme Court. However, the activists involved did not rely on the court for justice: the main impact came as a result of popular indignation, most of it due to people opposing the methods police used against the journal: this was the first police raid against the media in Norway since Quisling was prime minister during the Nazi occupation, 1941-1945.

On a more routine basis, official channels can undermine movements by encouraging some activists to join the system — called co-option — leaving others isolated as outsiders who are dismissed as too radical and who become more vulnerable to attack. Working inside the system can sometimes be effective but it can dampen movement momentum.

### *5. Resistance*

Attackers use intimidation and bribery to discourage expression of outrage. Not everyone is able to resist. But if some people can resist, such as the courageous protesters in East Timor and the Philippines, this sends a powerful message, encouraging others.

Resistance can occur in even the most repressive situations and contexts, including in prison, concentration camps and the most brutal and oppressive regimes. James C. Scott has documented everyday resistance among peasants and slaves.<sup>9</sup>

In East Germany, for decades after 1945, opposition to the government had been curtailed through extensive surveillance, penalties for critics and rewards for supporters. In 1989, with the end of Soviet protection and the opening of an exit route to the west, there were some small rallies. Within a matter of weeks, the rallies became larger: visible resistance encouraged more participation. Before long, the regime collapsed.<sup>10</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In deciding on what, when and how to protest, it's useful to think of audiences and messages.

### *Audiences*

How do audiences and activist methods interact? Opponents, third parties and activists themselves are important audiences.

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### *Alignment*

How do activist methods align with activist goals? If there is close alignment, it's more likely the right message will be received.

### *Attacks*

How will an attack be perceived? It's vital to be prepared to counter the methods of cover-up, devaluation, reinterpretation, official channels, intimidation and bribery.

### **Postscript: documentation, evaluation and dissemination**

For actions to become more effective, activists need to learn from past experiences. They need to document and evaluate what they are doing and make this information available for others. Just as students at war colleges learn about historical battles from lectures and textbooks, activists must build a similar system for coming generations to learn from the history of social movements. This requires serious, critical evaluations of planning, actions and outcomes. It is just as important to study mistakes as to celebrate victories. Then these evaluations must be made available for other activists, taking into account different languages and contexts. It is a large task. There are many actions from which to learn!

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# Corporate Land Acquisition, Peasant Resistance and Satyagraha in Mulshi (Poona District)

*N. Benjamin*

## Context

JAMSETJI TATA FORESAW the potentiality of the development of hydroelectricity in the western ghats. After his death in 1904, his sons Dorabji and Ratanji implemented his ideas. In 1919 Bombay Government gave a concession to the Tatas to establish an undertaking for the generation of electrical energy by storage of water in a lake to be formed by damming the rivers Nila and Mula at their point of junction near Mulshi village in Pune district.

The Tatas saw many advantages in the construction of a dam at Mulshi (Poona district). It would provide electricity to the textile mills of Bombay. Electric power could be used to run the trains between Bombay and Pune. This would save 525,000 tons of coal a year and free 26,259 railway wagons and tramways for use for other purposes. After generating electricity, the water would be available for irrigation. The compensation offered to the peasants for their land was liberal. The Company would give an additional bonus of 15-20 per cent to all landowners who willingly sold their land. So confident were the Tatas as to the adequacy of the compensation that they were ready to refer the matter to arbitrators appointed by them and the leaders of the peasants in equal numbers and in the event of a difference arising, an umpire acceptable to both the parties to decide between them. The establishment of the works would give to the labourers nearly four times the income they could get from cultivation. The Tatas expected

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this venture to be profitable and hoped to use the profit for the future development of the country.<sup>1</sup>

After the Government accepted this proposal, it decided to apply the Land Acquisition Act to acquire the land. Peasants of the Mavli caste mostly owned it. In June 1919 it served notices to the peasants of Mulshi Peta under the Act. About 10,000 peasants would have to move out and their land submerged in the water of the dam.

### Resistance by Peasants

However, the peasants refused to part with their land. They complained that the Government allowed the Company to begin the construction work even before it legally acquired the land. Once an angry peasant stopped Mr. White, an officer of the Company, from doing his work. Mr. White pulled out the revolver from his pocket and threatened to use it. The peasant accepted the challenge. Although a clash was avoided, the incident received publicity and the peasants became restive.

They petitioned the Government from time to time. In January 1921 around 15,000 people from about 50 villages represented to the Duke of Connaught that since the Government had permitted the Company to construct the dam, their land would submerge in water and they would wander elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> They also dispatched memorials and deputations to Government officials.

Since the Government failed to respond, the peasants resolved that if it did not halt the work, they had "a lawful right" to do so "by peaceful and passive resistance." They decided to exercise it from April 4, 1921.<sup>3</sup>

A public meeting attended by nearly 1,000 persons was held in Poona under the presidentship of Shivaram Mahadev Paranjpe (an associate of Tilak) on March 29, 1921. L.B. Bhopatkar said that the Land Acquisition Act was *ultra vires* as no government had a right to encroach the private possessions of the people. Besides, the Mulshi Peta valley had historical importance as Shivaji had slaughtered Aurangzeb's army there. He pleaded that Maharashtra should take up Satyagraha. J.S. Karandikar (a hardcore Tilakite), D.V. Godbole and S.G. Lavate also opposed the acquisition of the peasants' lands. DIG (Police), CID, Poona in his confidential remarks said that the meeting was impressive and that every speaker emphasized non-violence.<sup>4</sup>

The peasants had never heard of Satyagraha but they agreed to adopt it when the Brahmins suggested it. The District Magistrate of Poona wrote, "The latest threat is that the Mavlis will start passive resistance on April 16." But if that happened, he anticipated "a rather

half-hearted performance."<sup>5</sup>

Vinayak Mahadev Bhuskute, a journalist and political worker, decided to visit the villages in Mulshi Peta and addressed meetings. N.C. Kelkar, editor of *Kesari*, assured his support to the peasants and asked them to be prepared to launch Satyagraha. It was made obligatory for the satyagrahis to sign a pledge that they would not give their land. More than a thousand peasants signed it. Their battle cry was 'Land or Life.' But Kelkar and the moneylenders, who had shown interest in mobilizing the peasants, developed cold feet. They favoured postponement of Satyagraha and suggested a compromise with the Company on the basis of a suitable compensation to the peasants. Since the peasants had already mortgaged their land with the moneylenders, this would have benefited the latter. So most peasants rejected the suggestion to postpone the Satyagraha.

A meeting was held in Poona on April 12, 1921, in which Paranjpe presided. Shankar Dattatraya Dev advocated the policy of Satyagraha to compel the Company to abandon the scheme. But the meeting closed owing to the rain.

After the meeting Pandurang Mahadev Bapat, Balukaka Kanitkar and Haribhau Phatak agreed to lead the peasants. On April 15, 1921 Bapat arrived at the Mulshi camp of the satyagrahis. In the evening he attended a meeting to finalise the arrangements for the Satyagraha.<sup>6</sup> Next day the peasants marched in a procession towards the site of the proposed dam. Vithoba Nanivalikar led the procession. The Company's workers were digging ditches. The satyagrahis surrounded the workers and appealed to them to stop their work. Bapat made a moving speech, which brought tears in the eyes of many listeners. W.F. Hudson, District Magistrate, Poona, wrote that the proceedings were orderly and there was no violence.<sup>7</sup>

A leaflet in Marathi written by "A Maval from Mulshi Peta" was distributed in Poona. Its title was "Passive resistance" and sub-title "Open cry of the Mavalis." It said, "The passive resistance movement has been started on the auspicious day of Ram Navami (16<sup>th</sup> instant) in accordance with the injunctions of Gandhi against the Tata Company and their supporters the Government, who want to ruin us (Mavalis) completely by drowning our lands in the name of Law under the so-called just British rule." It asked for food donations for the satyagrahis. It continued, "Our opponents have since last Wednesday commenced their work with added vigour and (are) thus trying to overcome us. We will however disappoint them in their aim by our courage and righteous perseverance. We earnestly request our Poona Brethren to come to us and see our courage and tenacity."<sup>8</sup>

On April 17, 1921, there was a meeting in Poona presided over

by Paranjpe. He complimented the peasants for their strict adherence to non-violence.<sup>9</sup>

In view of the continuing Satyagraha, both the parties agreed to wait for six months and the Company decided to stop the work. But when Bapat and his companions tried to remove the rails, they were arrested.

*Bombay Chronicle* interviewed Cameron, the Company's engineer. When asked if it was right for the Company to proceed with the work without the consent of the peasants, he gave example of the British practice. In England once a company prepared a scheme, it went to the Parliament and if the latter sanctioned, it was executed. He added that the Government put the proposed scheme before the local legislature, which sanctioned it. He was asked whether the work was begun in England without giving sufficient notice to the landholders. He admitted that it was not so. He argued that the same method was adopted in the case of Andhra Valley power project of the Tatas. But he kept quiet when told that two wrongs did not make one right.<sup>10</sup>

In June 1921, some 20 or 30 satyagrahis headed by Deshdas Ranade and Bapat sat on the rails of the Chinchwad Mulshi train (which was taking workers for the works) near Paud village. The train was held up. The satyagrahis were asked to move aside so that the train might proceed. But they refused unless they were given an assurance that the rails laid on the public road at Shera would be removed within a fortnight. They complained of not receiving a reply from the Company to the notice they had sent the previous month. About 20 or 30 workers of the Company joined the satyagrahis. Around 75 workers came to remove the satyagrahis from the rails. The train started moving. The satyagrahis tried to lie down under its wheels but the workers prevented them. Some one raised a cry and stones were thrown. Both the satyagrahis and workers alleged that the other party first threw them. Five or six Tata workers were hurt. One of them had a gash on the head and another a broken arm. The satyagrahis and villagers then proceeded and pulled up the permanent way for about 120 yards and demolished three culverts. The court found some satyagrahis guilty and awarded Bapat simple imprisonment for six months.<sup>11</sup>

In a meeting attended by about 400 people at Nene Ghat (Poona district) on October 1, 1921, V.D. Phatak said, "Volunteer Ranade is sentenced for picketing and he is gone to jail. . . . I congratulate him. . . . I hope we shall have many more opportunities of congratulating men who would go to jail for similar causes." Bhuskute was more vehement, "I ask all the young men to come forward and be ready to

go to jail for at least six months in this just struggle." A programme of Satyagraha was worked out. The organization to carry it out was to be called Satyagraha Mandal with headquarters in Poona. It was decided to do Satyagraha in 20 places from Nagpur to Bijapur. The satyagrahis would advise the workers not to work for the Company. One woman gave a pair of gold bangles for the Satyagraha work. Forms were given which the people signed. The CID Report dated the 7<sup>th</sup> instant stated that it was proposed to issue another set of forms to government servants and others who wished to support the movement with money but did not want their identity to be known.<sup>12</sup>

V.D. Phadke, Secretary, Satyagraha Mandal, Poona, informed the editor of *Bombay Chronicle* that the construction work of the dam would be resumed on November 7. He wrote, "The grim determination of the Mawlas will not budge an inch and they have made up their minds, to devote their best energies by concentrating (on) their peaceful fight on the basis of Satyagraha."<sup>13</sup>

R.D. Tata, a director of the Company, met the Collector of Poona, in November 1921 in connection with the resumption of work, which had remained suspended since April 1921. Tata was anxious that the Government should not increase the police force or do anything, which could be construed as a display of force at the site. He said that the Tatas had many interests in other parts of India and several schemes for the future. Hence, they did not want a serious row at Mulshi. They would wait for the agitation to subside rather than incur the odium to their name that the Government had used firearms against the peasants because of them.<sup>14</sup>

But after some time the Tatas became anxious to resume the work from March 1922. The Government feared that it would activate the satyagrahis. They might sit in the foundation of the dam. Tata suggested that the Government's forces could surround them and starve them to surrender. But this would have required extensive deployment of forces resulting in a clash with the satyagrahis and even casualties. Hence, it did not favour this course of action.<sup>15</sup>

The second phase of Satyagraha commenced on May 1, 1922. Bapat was elected president of the Satyagraha Mandal and the peasants started calling him Senapati. He considered non-violent Satyagraha as only one of the methods to achieve the goal. If it did not succeed for three years, he was willing to resort to Shuddha Satyagraha, which, according to him, permitted the use of violent means if the intentions were pure. Earlier he even said that it was the duty of a man to kill the wicked. When he led a group of satyagrahis, he was arrested and imprisoned for six months.

There was an All-Maharashtra Mulshi Conference in Bombay on June 11, 1922. About 500 delegates attended it. It started with songs by Mulshi Satyagraha Girls' Mela. In his presidential address Dr. B.S. Munje said, "In a self-governing country...the evils accruing from indulgence in mechanical industrialism are compensated by the power which the nation possesses to regulate its own life. This fundamental condition... is absolutely wanting in India...." If a scheme were launched in England, which would submerge Westminster Abbey, Parliament Houses or the birthplace of Shakespeare, there would be an agitation. He asked, "If such is likely to be the result... in a highly civilized and educated country as England, is it unjust and fair to say that what little protest in being made by the proverbially docile and law-abiding Hindus, and Mavalas... is unnatural, unholy and therefore deserving of condemnation?" He gave reasons for which the project was opposed. While the development of industries in India was desired, one should guard against unbalanced development. Europeans managed the Tata companies and so "...they are being looked upon rightly or wrongly as nothing less than purely European companies." He added, "No government can have any moral justification for going into combination with private commercial companies commanding large capitals, which practically seems to have been done by the Bombay Government with the Tata Company in this Mulshi Petha project." The Company should have "amicably settled" the matter with the peasants. Besides, there were two ancient temples of "unique sacredness" on the land for whose maintenance land was given centuries back and which was continued by the British Government. These temples would be submerged in water.<sup>16</sup>

The Conference congratulated the peasants for starting the Satyagraha on April 16, 1921. Resolution 3 directed:

1. The Company's men should be obstructed by non-violent means when they were at work.
2. Land that had been dug for the foundation of the dam should be filled up by throwing stones, etc.
3. Efforts should be made to prevent the Company from getting labourers, etc.
4. Violence should be eschewed.

Resolution 4 suggested that for continuing the Satyagraha,

1. Maharashtra should spend at least Rs. three lakhs.
2. It should send 3,000 persons to jail.
3. The duration of Satyagraha should be three years.

The Conference noted that violence was done against the satyagrahis in the following ways:

1. They were beaten until they fell unconscious.
2. The breasts of women satyagrahis were touched.
3. Some men undressed before women satyagrahis.
4. Obscene language was used for satyagrahi leaders.

On his release in February 1923, Bapat was re-elected president of the Satyagraha Mandal. He attempted to mobilize public support for the peasants. A.W.W. Mackie, District Magistrate, Poona, wrote to the Commissioner, Central Division, Poona, "One object of the leaders of this movement is to compel Government to imprison as many boys and youths as possible."<sup>17</sup> But the Satyagraha lost its momentum by then. Probably to invigorate it, Bapat became more belligerent. In a meeting in Belgaum he even observed that the situation demanded the use of bombs. The Government found the speech objectionable and sentenced him to one year's imprisonment in October 1923. He was released in October 1924. He continued his brand of Satyagraha. On December 9, he and his satyagrahis put barricades to prevent the movement of the train, which was bringing the Company's workers from Chinchwad. When the driver stopped the train and some workers got down to remove the barricades, the armed satyagrahis attacked them. Bapat or Goray used the revolver and wounded the driver. Thereafter the satyagrahis surrendered to the police. The High Court sentenced Bapat to seven years' rigorous imprisonment.

### **Discussion in Bombay Legislative Council**

This Satyagraha evoked discussion in the Legislative Council. On March 16, 1920 Raghunath Purshottam Paranjpye moved a resolution to the effect, "This Council recommends that Government be pleased, when acquiring land for a new commercial concern under the Land Acquisition Act, to lay down a condition that the dispossessed owners be given the option of receiving the compensation for their lands in the form of fully paid up shares in the concern at par." Referring to the Tata Company and two other companies, he argued, "Now, these are companies for the purpose of making profit. But do they serve public interest? Of course... anything that is done... has more or less a remote reference to the interests of the public. But... whether the harm that is done and the outrage on the sentiments of the people are commensurate with the public interest which is subserved by these schemes." Considering the hardship to the people and their attachment to their land "... it is not enough to say they (peasants) are

getting 15 per cent more than the market value of their land and that, therefore, they should not grumble." Besides, the Government did not accept responsibility of providing land to the people elsewhere. While the directors and their friends were taking the shares, "...people whose lands are taken up are themselves not able to get shares in these companies." Supporting him, P.J. Mead said that he had received a deputation of the cultivators and that "The lands in question have not been notified. Therefore, the company had to pay precisely what the cultivators chose to ask for permission to enter on these lands, which was a matter of urgency."

Purshotamdas Thakurdas, who was a director of the Company, defended it, "More than 75 per cent of the people whose lands were to be acquired allowed admission to the officers.... only six or seven people resisted the officers of the company or the acquisition officers...." He claimed that the directors of the Company were "... very anxious to see that the agriculturalists there get the full value of the land and, in addition, 15 per cent., and, if any cultivator had expressed any desire to subscribe to the shares, the directors would have been willing to let them have all they wanted." He pointed out, "The one evil is of temporary inconveniencing the people whose lands have been taken up and the other evil is of leaving things as they are even though capable of improvement." All companies did not pay dividends and some of them even failed. He asked what would Paranjpye say "... about the discontent that would arise among these people if anything like that happened?" Phiroze C. Sethna pointed out that it was "a great pang" to see the Bombay Improvement Trust acquiring land held by the people for decades, "... yet in the general interest this has to be done." G.K. Parekh said, "... it would always be an advantage to them (peasants) if some arrangement could be made for housing them and for providing them with lands for cultivation." T.J. Strangman and C.V. Mehta suggested amendments in the resolution, which were accepted by Paranjpye. Mehta's resolution was much similar to the original resolution. It was put to vote. 13 members voted for and 21 against it. Hence, it was lost.

On August 6, 1920 K.R. Godbole initiated discussion of the issue of land acquisition for companies. While not naming the Tata Company, he said that the "cardinal principle" of land tenure in the Presidency was that "... no one will be disturbed in the possession of his holding while he is paying Government assessment." He suggested, "When land has to be acquired for companies for new industries, Government should not acquire the land outright, but should assist the companies in getting the same on long lease." It should settle fair terms for the lease, and when the lease option failed,

then only the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act should be applied. If the land was to be obliterated altogether, as in the case of the hydro-electric schemes, "...every attempt should be made to lease the land on long term leases rather than acquire it outright." Opposing this proposal, Thakurdas asked what would happen after 50 years? G.S. Curtis (Finance Member) pointed out that while the government had no objection to the lease proposal, the subject of land acquisition for industries was under consideration. He assured the House that the Government would consider arguments on both the sides and asked for the withdrawal of the resolution. Having received "partial assurance" from the Government, Godbole withdrew it.<sup>18</sup>

On March 19, 1921 V.R. Gupte raised a question regarding the alternative land, which could be provided to the displaced peasants. The Government informed him that land could be made available to them in districts other than Poona if they were willing to migrate there.<sup>19</sup> On March 22, 1921 he moved a resolution in the Council to the effect that works "...on account of the Tata hydro-electric works be stopped till this Council fully examines the scheme and considers the agreement, if any, to be formed by the Government with the said Company." He said that the government made acquisitions for the hydroelectric schemes of the Tatas in many locations. People in Poona district learnt that "practically very little compensation" was paid to the persons whose lands were acquired. The people of Mulshi learnt it as early as 1918. They petitioned the Collector and Commissioner that these lands should not be acquired as either they would be homeless or would become labourers in Bombay. Both the Collector and Commissioner feigned ignorance about these acquisitions. Then notices were served to them under the Land Acquisition Act in 1919. When the villagers went to the Collector to express their opposition to these acquisitions, they were told that the Company had worked on these schemes for nearly 20 years and so they could not be stopped at that late stage. The people sought to meet the Governor but in vain. When the Company started digging, the people sent telegrams to the Viceroy and others to inform them that the Company was going ahead with works on land, which did not belong to it. The officers of the Company went to the villagers with the Collector and asked them to accept the compensation offered. Some villagers did accept it on the strength of which the Company started digging. The officers also insisted that the agitation was not by the villagers but by outsiders. Initially the Company talked of 37 villages in which land would be acquired. Subsequently, it increased the number to 54. Gupte argued, "It is not the question of industrial growth. We do not want agriculturalists' land to be taken away from them without



proper provision being made." He questioned the idea of treating the project as a part of public works. D.P. Desai asked, "I have heard that many of the shares issued by the firm were being sold at more than their par value, and if they could get higher from the shares, why should the company not give more than enough value to the cultivators concerned as the concern appears to be a profitable one?" D.D. Gholop commented, "... the depressed classes... having no other remedy... appear to have joined the *satyagraha* movement there. The depressed classes as a class never take part in any political movement, but it is the stress of circumstances that has led them to do this at present." G.K. Chitale said, "Here you have a heart-rending picture of 15,000 people, men, women, and children, being taken off their lands which they value most, and as a matter of fact, without any arrangements being made for resettling them. That is the first thing which appeals to me in a manner which is not creditable to anybody."

Taking a different stand, Thakurdas observed, "... I can assure this council... that every one of the Directors together with the Agents firm, namely, Messrs. Tata and Sons, are anxious to give to the cultivators one per cent more than what Government in their impartial judgement think to be deserved by the cultivators." Pointing out the benefits of the project, he said, "It will save five lakhs and twenty-five thousand tons of coal every year for Bombay city or the cities between Bombay and Poona. There will be a saving to the industries in Bombay and up to Poona in steam power of 137 lakhs of rupees and so on." If so much coal were saved, 26,250 railway wagons would be free every year for other commercial work. Sir George Curtis quoted Thakurdas that the project was for public good. R.R. Kale proposed to amend the resolution,

"This Council recommends Government to take necessary steps to secure to the people affected by the Tata Hydro-Electric Works in the Mulshi peta of the Poona district liberal compensation either in kind or money at a very early date." The amendment was put to vote and carried. The original resolution, when put to vote, was lost.<sup>20</sup>

On March 18, 1922, S.K. Bole asked questions regarding (a) the number of persons affected by the Mulshi Peta scheme; and, (b) the number of bona fide Mavlis who would be dispossessed of their agricultural land by the scheme. Cowasji Jehangir replied on behalf of the Government that 7,939 village persons would be affected but the number of persons to be dispossessed was not known. On the second matter, the number was 1,634.<sup>21</sup>

In response to a question by R.G. Salgar, on December 4, 1922 Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoola gave the following replies on behalf of the

Government:-<sup>22</sup>

1. The number of khatedars whose land in Mulshi Petha was to be acquired was 2,259 and those who had mortgaged it with the sahukars was 1,200.
2. The sahukars belonged to the Gujar, Brahmin, Prabhu and Maratha-castes.
3. The khatedars who accepted compensation numbered 1,206. Their castes were Kunbi, Gujar, Brahmin, Maratha, Sonar, Chambhar, Kumbhar, etc.
4. The khatedars who did not accept compensation were of the same castes.

### **Gandhi's Attitude towards the Satyagraha**

Balukaka Kanitkar and Haribhau Phatak, who supported the peasants, met Gandhi in Bombay and sought his advice on the possibility of launching a Satyagraha. On receiving his nod, they met Bapat who afterwards became the undisputed leader of the movement. Little surprising then, the peasants raised slogans like "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" from time to time. However, his biographers have not made even a passing reference to his association with it.

Some factors weighed in his mind for doing this. First, he was a public worker and so could not ignore the problem of the downtrodden. Second, he always supported people who were ready to defend their possessions non-violently even if it meant sacrificing their life. Third, he personally knew some leaders of the peasants like V.V. Dastane and Dev. He had worked with Dev during the Champaran Movement and held him in high esteem. Fourth, political atmosphere was surcharged with the Non-Cooperation Movement and this movement could be an addendum to it.

Gandhi initially gave moral support to the peasants. He remarked, "My heart goes out to those poor people. I wish the great house of the Tatas, instead of standing on legal rights, will reason with the peasants themselves, and do whatever they wish in consultation with them.... What is the value of all boons that the Tata scheme claims to confer upon India, if it is to be at the unwilling expense of even one poor?" He had experience of the working of the land acquisition acts and knew that the dispossessed people did not receive sufficient compensation. His advice was, "I suggest to the custodians of the great name that they would more truly advance India's interest if they will defer to the wishes of their weak and helpless countrymen."<sup>23</sup> He reminded the Company, "If a man does not want to relinquish his rights over a plot of land, it is not in keeping with

the traditions of our country to obtain possession of it by recourse to law." He continued, "It is welcome to acquire the land even without payment with people's goodwill, but I hope it will make no move to obtain it so long as even one owner is unwilling. It may be European civilization to acquire land by recourse to a Land Acquisition Act, but I should have nothing to do with a civilization which I believe to be Satanic. So long, therefore, as the people of Mulshi Peta carry on their fight on peaceful lines, the whole of India should back them."<sup>24</sup>

When some satyagrahis were arrested and lodged in Yeravada Jail, Gandhi was also serving a prison sentence there. On February 9, 1923, the satyagrahis were flogged in the Jail for not doing their work. Next day Gandhi wrote a letter to Major Whitworth Jones, Jail Superintendent, saying, "Yesterday morning I heard screaming and some of the men about shouted out: "There goes flogging." I wondered. A short while after, I saw four or five young men... walking very slowly and with bent backs. I observed that they were in great pain. They bowed to me. I returned the bow." He continued, "The object in writing this is to know whether I could be permitted to see these men who are refusing to work. If I find them to be acting foolishly or thoughtlessly, I might be able to persuade them to reconsider their position. Satyagraha requires a prisoner to obey all reasonable prison regulations, and certainly to do the work given." Gandhi admitted, "I know that a prisoner cannot ordinarily be permitted to assist or intervene in prison administration. My only ground for expecting response to my suggestion is that of common humanity."<sup>25</sup> Major Jones thanked Gandhi but regretted that the offer could not be accepted. Then, Jeramdas Doulatram, Secretary of Sind Provincial Congress Committee and a fellow prisoner, crossed over from his barrack to that of the Mulshi Peta prisoners and persuaded them to do the assigned work. So he was confined to his own cell as a punishment. Gandhi was grieved and penned another letter to the Jail Superintendent on the 12<sup>th</sup> instant, "I do not write this to complain, but to ask for the same or greater punishment for myself.... For the breach is more mine than Mr. Jeramdas's. I asked him to tell any Mulshi Peta man he could see that, if he claimed to be satyagrahi, he should not refuse to work.... I assure you that I would not misunderstand the infliction of punishment on me. I should feel sorry if I escape when the one who is less guilty- if there be guilt in the act- is punished." The Superintendent visited Gandhi in his cell and told him that whatever Jeramdas did was done openly and so the breach of jail regulations had to be noted. But Gandhi did not leave his cell and could not be punished. Jeramdas recollected after many years, "As a result of Gandhiji's intervention through me, the Mulshi Peta

prisoners responded and carried out the task imposed on them. The authorities had intended to give them the punishment of whipping in case they persisted in their refusal.... This would have led to other developments and, I believe, might have led to Gandhiji's intervention in a much more active manner, leading to other consequences."<sup>26</sup> Gandhi dispatched another letter to the Jail Superintendent on February 12 blaming the satyagrahis, "If these prisoners claim to be satyagrahis, they are bound to obey all prison regulations so long as they are not humiliating or unreasonable, and certainly to the best of their capacity do the tasks allotted to them. If, therefore, they have refused to work or do not work according to physical capacity, they are committing a breach of their own canon of good conduct in addition to that of prison regulations." Hence, Gandhi reiterated, "I am sure that the authorities do not desire to flog them, if they can be otherwise persuaded to work, and that they would wish prisoners to yield to reason rather than to fear of punishment. I fancy that the men will listen to me. I, therefore, request that I may be permitted to meet in your presence all the Mulshi Peta men who willfully break prison regulations, so that I may explain to them their duty as satyagrahis if they claim to be such."<sup>27</sup> The Jail Superintendent informed Gandhi that while the Government thanked him for the offer, it could not be accepted.

After some time the satyagrahis observed fast on the Ashadh Ekadeshi and did not work on that day. Therefore, they were flogged again. Dev was punished with 30 strips of whipping. At each stripe, he shouted 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' till he fainted and fell down. He, Dastane and others undertook hunger strike from June 27. When Gandhi learnt it, he wrote to the Jail Superintendent on June 28, "I heard this morning that six Mulshi Peta prisoners were flogged today for short task.... Today's news has considerably agitated me and seems almost to compel some action on my part. But I want to take no hasty step. And I owe it to you that I should, before doing anything whatsoever, seek accurate information from you regarding the punishment, which I do hereby." So great was his distress that on next day Gandhi reminded the Jail Superintendent of his request to meet the satyagrahis. He added, "I did not press my request further, if only for the reason that I had hoped that occasion would not again arise for flogging such prisoners." He repeated, "I believe that, if I could see the prisoners, I could induce them to look at their imprisonment in the proper light and not to shirk work or to resort to insubordination, as they are said to have done. To enable me to do so from time to time, I request that I may be accommodated with them. If this cannot be done, I request permission to see the prisoners

as often as the occasion may require." Gandhi was contemplating a fast should the Government refuse. Hence, he warned, "I venture to trust that the Government will reciprocate the spirit of my letter and not put me, by rejecting my offer of service, in the most awkward position of being compelled to take action, which may, without any such wish on my part, prove embarrassing to them."<sup>28</sup> The Jail Superintendent did not reply to this letter and the prisoners continued their hunger strike. Hence, Gandhi informed him on July 9, 1923, "As time passes, the agitation of my soul increases.... I cannot forget that I am a human being, or public worker and reformer.... I feel about these fasting prisoners exactly as I would about a blood brother." Hence, Gandhi said, "Unless, therefore, in the meanwhile some satisfactory reply is received by the end of the day, purely as a solace for my own soul, and for no other reason, I propose to fast from tomorrow (not denying myself water and salt) till a satisfactory solution is reached, i.e., till the hunger-strike ends and the situation sought to be covered by my proposal...is fully met." Gandhi clarified, "I shall fast not because these Mulshi Peta prisoners are fasting, but because I am debarred from helping, though I feel confident that I can help, to end the prevailing hunger-strike and prevent a recurrence of the events that have ended in the hunger strike."<sup>29</sup> F.C. Griffiths, Inspector-General of Police, met Gandhi in the jail as the Governor's emissary. While complaining that Gandhi held out a threat to the Government, Griffiths informed him that the Governor would allow him to see the strikers, as well as issue instructions to stop the flogging of satyagrahi prisoners except for assaults on officials after prior sanction of the Government. While thanking the Governor, Gandhi denied that the proposed fast was intended as a threat to the Government and if treated as such "... it might be regarded as entirely cancelled or withdrawn."<sup>30</sup>

The matter ended as Gandhi was permitted to meet the strikers. Dev and Dastane accepted his arguments and broke their fast. He was gratified that the Government agreed to stop indiscriminate flogging in the future. Gandhi reviewed the episode in *Young India*. Indulal Yagnik (then Secretary of Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee) and Manzar Ali Sokta were then fellow prisoners. They suggested him to undertake a sympathetic hunger strike. Gandhi wrote, "We discussed the propriety of such a strike and came to the conclusion that it would be wrong to do so. We were neither morally nor in any way responsible for the floggings or the subsequent hunger-strike. As satyagrahis we were to be prepared for and to suffer cheerfully the rigours of jail life and even injustices including flogging. Such hunger-strike, therefore, with a view to preventing

future punishment would be a species of violence done to the jail officials. Moreover, we had no right to sit in judgment upon the action of the jail authorities.... we had no data to enable us to judge whether their action was justified or not. So we all decided that I should approach the authorities in the matter." When he met the strikers, he asked, "...as satyagrahis who were out for suffering, how could they fast against injustices whether done to them or their co-prisoners? My friends appreciated the force of my argument.... They agreed to break the fast and to persuade the others to do likewise." Wrote Gandhi, "A hearty handshake between us all terminated the meeting. For the moment the officials were not the officials and we were not prisoners. We were all friends engaged in solving a knotty problem and glad that it was solved."<sup>31</sup>

Gandhi opined on both the Jail Superintendent and satyagrahis. He wrote, "Whilst, in my opinion, the flogging in question was a grave error of judgment on the part of the Superintendent, it was nothing more. Major Jones was often hasty, but so far as I am aware never heartless."<sup>32</sup> All the same, he observed, "Some of these prisoners were youngsters. It is likely that they had wilfully (sic) done much less task than they could have. They were put on grinding.... All labour is irksome when it has to be done as a task and under supervision not always gentle. But a prisoner who courts imprisonment for conscience sake should look upon his task as a matter of pride and pleasure.... The Mulshi Peta prisoners... were certainly not of this type.... But they were mostly high-spirited men and youths."<sup>33</sup>

Gandhi became disenchanted with the satyagrahis before long. He wrote to Dastane, "It appears to me that the movement has got to be dropped for two reasons or rather three." First, most men affected by land acquisition accepted compensation and the few who did not were untraceable. Second, the dam was nearly half-finished and its progress could not be permanently stopped, as there seemed to be "no ideal behind the movement." Thirdly, wrote he, "The leader of the movement is not a believer out and out in non-violence. This defect is fatal to success."<sup>34</sup> Gandhi could not be a party to Bapat's brand of Satyagraha.

Gandhi's distress was even more when Bapat attacked the train carrying workers for the dam that resulted in the injury of the engine driver and some workers. He called it "a crime" which deserved "the highest condemnation." He commented, "The self-styled friends of the Mulshi villagers had a perfect right, if they so wished, to go to the labourers and by argument wean them away from labouring for the Tatas. But they had no right to take the law into their own hands.

They had damaged a good cause by adopting the wrong method of terrorism and alienated what public sympathy they had."<sup>35</sup>

In short, Gandhi's attitude towards this Satyagraha underwent a transformation over time. Initially he gave moral support to it. Next, he became actively involved in it when the satyagrahis were flogged and undertook hunger strike in the jail. Because of his intervention the hunger strike ended and indiscriminate flogging stopped. At the end, he dissociated himself from it as it drifted towards violence and even criticized it.

### Concluding remarks

The Government was naturally critical of this Satyagraha. In a press note the Director of Information, Government of Bombay wrote that the agitation was started "... principally by leaders of the Non-Cooperation party, with a view to stirring up the people of Mulshi Peta to refuse compensation of any kind and to insist on retaining their land under any circumstances.... no question as to the reasonableness of the compensation paid has arisen. The whole agitation was directed towards embarrassing Government and the Company by urging the cultivators not to give up their land at any price whatsoever."<sup>36</sup> The biographer of Bapat concedes, "It is believed that the construction of the Koyna Dam, in particular, was postponed till independence because of the agitation at Mulshi and it is ironical that the Marathi-speaking people had to mobilize public support for the construction of the Koyna Dam in the first decade after independence."<sup>37</sup>

All the same, this Satyagraha brought the peasants in the fold of freedom struggle and removed the fear of imprisonment from their minds. Rigorous imprisonment for two to six months was awarded to 51 satyagrahis between May 2 and 16, 1922. Others were given simple imprisonment. Many satyagrahis were young- from 15 to 19 years. Krishnaji Rajaram was just 14 years. But some convicts were over 60 years old.<sup>38</sup> The peasant agitation also showed that as in the case of Non-Cooperation Movement, a public activity could have Gandhi's backing only if it was along the non-violent lines.

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3. *Mahratta*, March 13, 1921.
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5. Letter dated April 9/10, 1921. *Ibid.*
6. This and other information regarding him is taken from Y.D. Phadke, *Senapati Bapat Portrait of a revolutionary* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1994), chapters 3 & 4.
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11. Letter no. 4828 dated June 9, 1921 from I.C. Boyd, Deputy Superintendent of Police to the District Magistrate, Poona. File no. 555/21 Home Deptt. Special. 1921.
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26. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-58.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 158-59.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-68.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
30. Letter to F.C. Griffiths dated July 24, 1923. *Ibid.*, p.171.
31. "My jail experiences-VI Ethics of fasting," *Young India*, May 22, 1924.
32. "Comment on prison conditions," *Young India*, March 6, 1924.



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# Fasting in Satyagraha

*M.P. Mathai*

IT IS GENERALLY agreed that the most potent legacy of Gandhi to the world is the technique of satyagraha. Satyagraha is a way of life as well as a method for fighting injustice and evil. In the contemporary discourse on satyagraha, particularly the western, the second aspect, i.e., non-violent direct action is emphasized almost to the exclusion of the first. It is important to remember that in Gandhian satyagraha there is a complete fusion of these two aspects. The effectiveness of the application of the second is dependent to a very considerable extent on the acceptance of the first.

Satyagraha as non-violent direct action is a moral weapon and requires qualified and trained moral soldiers (satyagrahis) for its effective use. Gandhi had laid down seven points as the qualifications of a satyagrahi suggesting that they were not exhaustive but indicative.<sup>1</sup> Training, here, means, among other things, the internalization of the values of truth and nonviolence and an unflinching adherence to them even under the heaviest of pressures and threats. But it has been our experience in India that this moral weapon which presupposes strict adherence to principles is widely misused and sometimes even abused by individuals and groups. Many of the agitations like sit-ins (downs), hartals, hunger strikes etc., organized by political parties, trade unions, students /youth/ voluntary organizations witnessed in the contemporary history of India have been assigned the name of satyagraha. An analysis of these agitations on the basis of the criteria laid down by Gandhi for satyagraha would show that they lack genuineness and hence could be classified as *duragraha* and not satyagraha. *Duragraha* means stubborn persistence in an untruthful or wrong cause.<sup>2</sup> They are similar to

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satyagraha only in externals. This is particularly true of FASTING which is one of the three forms of satyagraha, non-cooperation and civil disobedience being the other two. As the most widely misunderstood, misrepresented and misused form of satyagraha, it calls for a restatement of how Gandhi understood, explained and practised fasting.

As was his wont Gandhi borrowed ideas and insights from various religious traditions in developing his concept of fasting also. In all major religious traditions fasting is prescribed as a method of self-purification and the purification of others. In the Hindu tradition (to which Gandhi belonged) fasting had been resorted to not only for self-purification but also as a method of protest. It was an essential part of the Hindu ethical practice of *tapasya* which meant penance and austerities. Fasting had become almost synonymous with the Hindu practice of *upavasa* which really meant sitting by God in complete self-surrender and contemplation but was misinterpreted to mean giving up food. *Upavasa* has to be distinguished from *anasanam* which only means abstaining from taking food. This may be identified as the prototype of contemporary hunger strike. In the Judaic tradition there was the concept of representative leadership and a person as a representative of the community could offer fast for a common cause. In an article on the topic Gandhi cited from the Bible (the Book of Jonah, Chapter 3, verses 5-10) the example of the fast that the king and the people of Nineveh undertook as an example for a penitential fast.<sup>3</sup> In the Christian tradition the concept of suffering love and vicarious atonement formed the constituent elements of fasting. Jesus' fast for forty days in the wilderness had been accepted as a model by Christians. Gandhi also cited the example of Prophet Mohammed's fast and wrote: "He achieved most of his great things by fasting and prayer".<sup>4</sup> Gandhi fused some of the elements and insights of these traditions in developing his concept of fasting. In fact, he critically re-examined the Hindu tradition in the light of the insight he gained from other traditions and transformed the Hindu concept of fasting to make it more comprehensive, potent and efficacious. It may be said that Gandhi's fasts, thus, form a new category.

A fast is, in essence, purificatory. Generally it is undertaken to achieve self-purification and to attain self control. It could be undertaken as a penance to atone for the sins or evil deeds of others and to awaken their sense of guilt and to arouse their moral and spiritual impulses. The other dimension of fast is that when used properly it will operate as sanction on opponents. Gandhi's fasts exemplify all these dimensions. (For a chronology of Gandhi's fasts indicating their purpose see Appendix).

Although fasting is one of the three major forms of Satyagraha, Gandhi laid down a special set of rules for its practice, which differentiated it from the other two forms. The reasons why Gandhi laid down those stringent rules for fasting could be deduced from the way he described fasting. According to him it was a fiery, potent and dangerous weapon. He himself was not sure about how powerful it could be. He wrote: "no one, as far as I am aware, has a perfect knowledge of it"<sup>5</sup> and, therefore, it should not be handled amateurishly. As it was probably the most powerful weapon in the armory of the satyagrahi, it required the greatest care and preparedness for its deployment. Besides the general qualifications he prescribed for any satyagrahi<sup>6</sup> like a living faith in God, acceptance of truth and non-violence as a creed (faith), leading a chaste life, and a readiness to suffer, he imposed more severe conditions for one undertaking a fast. He/she must have achieved almost complete self-purification by devotedly following the laws of ahimsa. His/her faith in God must be accompanied by infinite patience, firm resolve, single-mindedness of purpose, perfect inner calm, and no anger or ill-will to the adversary.<sup>7</sup> In other words, one must be pure in body, mind and spirit to deserve the right to fast.

It has to be noted that every fast of Gandhi, with no exception, was dictated and directed by 'the still, small voice within' which for Gandhi was the voice of his conscience or of God within. Gandhi was of the view that only if you are pure and calm internally you will be able to hear the dictates of your conscience. ('Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God', says one of the Beatitudes in the Bible. Matthew, 5:8). Therefore, he insisted that only a person who is truly pure of heart could undertake a fast. Similarly, Gandhi laid great emphasis on the nature and quality of the relationship between the fasting person and the one at whom it was directed. He insisted that unless the relationship was based on selfless love (i.e., unless the satyagrahi was motivated by love only), a fast could not be undertaken. There was no room for ill will or coercion in fasting.

According to Gandhi fasting was the last weapon in the armory of the votary of *ahimsa*. "A satyagrahi should fast only as a last resort when all other avenues of redress have been explored and failed", wrote Gandhi.<sup>8</sup> Thus when human ingenuity failed completely, and the votary of ahimsa was absolutely in the dark, not knowing what to do, there remains only one option for him and that was to throw himself or herself out at the feet of God and pray for light and guidance. For Gandhi fasting was just that: surrendering before God and awaiting His command and direction. In Gandhi's words it meant reducing oneself to a cipher and submitting oneself unconditionally

to the will of God, ready to act as His instrument. And when you receive the command and act upon it, it will certainly awaken the sleeping conscience of the people to whom the fasting person is closely known.<sup>9</sup>

When a person thus prostrates himself before God in prayer, intensely seeking His guidance, his/her mind will be totally absorbed in such solicitous prayer that he/she will be naturally unconcerned with everything else including food. As Gandhi wrote: "Complete absorption in prayer must mean complete exclusion of physical activities till prayer possesses the whole of our being and we rise superior to, and are completely detached from, all physical functions....It is a yearning of the soul to merge in the divine essence."<sup>10</sup> This is the rationale of giving up food when one is on fast. Abstaining from food is not the defining characteristic of Gandhian fasting. It is something consequent on complete absorption in prayer by the fasting person. (It means a fast, so-called, without a total, prayerful surrender before God is to be termed only as hunger-strike.)

A reference to indefinite fast or fast unto death also is in order here as Gandhi had resorted to that kind of extreme step a few times in his satyagraha life. For him, fast unto death was the last and most potent weapon in the armory of satyagraha and therefore, must be handled with extreme care and caution. "It is a sacred thing. But it must be accepted with all its implications. It is not the fast itself but what it implies that matters", said Gandhi.<sup>11</sup> And in situations when nothing else seemed to work, he did undertake fast unto death. He was always ready to lay down his life if that was the price he should pay for making his people see and accept the truth of a certain situation. As this conviction was very deep-rooted in him he never bothered about what happened to his mortal body during the fast. But, in spite of his disapproval and opposition, people around him made much fuss about his survival and bargained over his life particularly when the doctors attending on him reported that he ran the risk of his life. People who were not very favourably inclined towards his fasts even alleged that he was trying to coerce his adversaries into accepting his position much against their will. A devout Christian once asked Gandhi whether his fast unto death was not coercive, Gandhi answered that if it was coercive it was the same coercion that Jesus exerted from the cross. For Gandhi it was an act of faith and, that too, directed (dictated) by God.

Fasts were and could be viewed and critiqued from different angles. It could be viewed from the angle of the person(s) to whom it is directed. Whether it succeeds in evoking the expected feelings of regret, remorse or repentance leading to a conversion experience is a

pertinent question to be examined. There were instances where fasts produced predominantly negative reactions and stiffened the resolve of the adversary. Even at the time of Gandhi there were diverse and contradictory responses to his fasts and he answered nearly all serious questions raised in this regard. While many of his admirers and fellow-seekers looked upon his fasts with what may be called religious feelings of reverential awe there were some who were highly skeptical about the very intentions of Gandhi. And they did not mince words in expressing their differences or conveying their feelings of disagreement and suspicion. The most noted among those who criticized Gandhi's fasts depicting them as highly coercive was, of course, Babasheb Ambedkar. The Hindu fundamentalists were no less vehement. When one surveys the responses evoked by Gandhi's fasts probably the most amazing thing to be noted was the concern with which the people in the West, including the political leaders (towards whom some of the fasts were directed) viewed them. For example, Ramsay MacDonald, the British Premier, on receiving a cabled message about the Yeravda pact (1932, September fast), hurried down to London from Sussex where he had gone to attend a funeral and held prolonged deliberations with his cabinet colleagues extending to midnight and accepted the pact paving the way for ending the fast which by the time had sent the anxiety of the concerned people all over the world to a very high pitch ( see, *Cry for Justice* in D.G.Tendular, *Mahatma*, Vol.3). For many genuine Christians in the west Gandhi's fasts were similar to the suffering of Jesus and hence special prayers were offered for Gandhi in Christian churches as expressions of solidarity with the cause for which he was undergoing the ordeal of suffering.

As already mentioned, for Gandhi a fast was an act faith directed by none but God and a close look at his fasts will show that all of them were undertaken in this spirit. Yet, Gandhi admitted that there were occasions when elements of error and coercion crept into his fasts like the Ahmedabad fast of 1918 and the Rajkot fast of 1939. This admission by a person like Gandhi indicates the degree of care and vigilance required for undertaking a measure like a fast. It is clear, thus, that most of the fasts we witness today are worse than a travesty, a burlesque of the Gandhian fast and serve only to create misconception about the great spiritual method.

#### **Appendix: Gandhi's Fasts**

1. 1913, (Phoenix). Penitential fast for a week for the moral lapse of two inmates of the Settlement. Took only one meal a day for the next four and half months.

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2. 1914, (Phoenix). Fourteen days fast for similar reason.
3. 1918, March 12, (Ahmedabad). On seeing that the mill workers were going back on their pledge, Gandhi declared that unless the strikers rally and continue the strike till a settlement is reached, he will not touch any food. Settlement was reached after three days' fast.
4. 1919, April 13, (Sabarmati). Penitential fast for three days for pulling off rails at Nadia.
5. 1921, Nov. 9-13, (Bombay). Five days' fast following rioting and bloodshed on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales.
6. 1922, February, second week, (Bardoli). Five days' penitential fast in connection with Chauri Chaura incident.
7. 1924, Sept. 18 to Oct. 8 (Delhi). Twenty-one days' fast as 'penance' for Hindu Muslim riots and 'prayer' for unity.
8. 1925, Nov. 24, (Sabarmati). Seven days' penitential fast for the lapses among the Ashram inmates.
9. 1932, Sept. 20, (Yeravda Prison). Started a fast unto death against MacDonald's Award of separate electorate. He broke the fast at 5 p.m., on Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> on receiving an assurance from the government.
10. 1932, Dec. 22, (Yeravda Prison). Sympathetic fast with Appasaheb Patwardhan whose request for scavengers work in jail was refused by the authorities. Within two days an assurance was given and the fast was broken.
11. 1933, May 8 to May 29, (Yeravda Prison). Self-purificatory fast for 21 days in connection with the Harijan cause. Government released Gandhi on the same day. Fast concluded on May 29<sup>th</sup> at 12 noon at 'Parnakuti' in Poona.
12. 1933, August 16, (Yeravda Prison). Started his projected fast as he was denied facilities for Harijan work in jail as demanded by him. He was removed to Sassoon Hospital on 20<sup>th</sup> inst., still a prisoner. As his condition became serious he was released unconditionally on Aug. 23.
13. 1934, August 7 to 14<sup>th</sup>, (Wardha). An irate reformer attacked an opponent of the Harijan uplift movement with a lathi. Gandhi undertook seven days' fast as penance for intolerance. Broke the fast at 6 a.m. on 14<sup>th</sup>.
14. 1939, March 3, (Rajkot). As the Rajkot ruler broke the solemn pact with his people, Gandhi fasted. The Viceroy suggested arbitration by the Chief Justice of India and the fast was broken on March 7.
15. 1943, Feb. 10 to March 3, (Aga Khan Palace). Undertook three weeks' fast as an appeal for justice from government. Broke the fast on March 3 at 9.34 a.m.
16. 1947, Sept. 1, (Calcutta). Fasted for Hindu-Muslim unity. Broke the fast on Sept. 4.
17. 1947, Jan. 13, (Delhi). Fast for communal harmony. Started after first meal on Jan. 13, and broke it on Jan. 18 on a written assurance given by the leaders of various communities to maintain communal peace.

**Notes and References**

1. M.K.Gandhi, *Harijan*, March 25, 1939.
2. See Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence* (revised edition), (Princeton NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1988) and R.R. Diwakar, *Saga of Satyagraha* ( New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1969).
3. see *Harijan* April 15,1933.
4. *Young India*, Oct.23, 1924.
5. *Harijan*, Oct.13, 1940.
6. see *Harijan*, March 25,1939.
7. see *Harijan*,Oct.13, 1940.
8. *Harijan*, April 21, 1946.
9. see *Harijan*, Dec.21, 1947.
10. *Harijan*, July 8, 1933.
11. *Harijan*, August18, 1946.

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## Special Issue on National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

### Contributions Invited

*Gandhi Marg* will bring out a special issue on the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Scheme in June 2008 ( Vol.30, No. 1). Scholars who are working in the area or on related themes are encouraged to contribute to the issue. We welcome both conceptual as well as empirical papers. A team will review all the contributions. Expression of interest in contributing to the issue is invited at this stage. Final contributions should be sent as email attachment to [editorgmarg@yahoo.co.in](mailto:editorgmarg@yahoo.co.in). Some proposed theme areas (merely indicative) are:

- History of Employment Guarantee Schemes in India
- Political economy of NREGA
- Trends in NREGA - Scenarios in different states- best practices
- Bureaucracy and rent seeking behaviour
- Right to Work and NREGA
- Civil Society activism and NREGA - social audit
- Right to Information and NREGA
- NREGA and the marginalized sections -Women – SCs and STs
- NREGA and Poverty alleviation – food security/ vulnerability
- The Institutional Structure- Panchayats
- Planning-related issues - labour budgeting etc.

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# Satyagraha: A Supreme Invention

*Geeta Mehta*

SATYAGRAHA IS THE METHOD adopted by Gandhi for bringing about social change involving conflict that cannot be addressed through available means of persuasion. It is Gandhi's invaluable contribution for resolving conflicts in society and so it is a step forward in the direction of social reconstruction.

Literally satyagraha means insistence on truth. The word 'satyagraha' is derived from the two words '*satya*' and '*agraha*'. Originally, Gandhi used the term 'passive resistance' to describe his movement in South Africa. Truth (*satya*) implies love, and firmness (*agraha*) is a synonym for force. Thus, Gandhi began to call the Indian movement 'satyagraha' that is to say, the force which is born of Truth and love or non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase 'passive resistance'.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi himself has said, "Satyagraha differs from passive resistance as the North pole from the South".<sup>2</sup>

Satyagraha also means insistence on the principle governing the universe, without disturbing the natural order of the universe. Gandhi recognizes the inevitability of change and so we have to insist on Truth.

The interpretation of satyagraha, implying force in Truth, is mainly metaphysical. This interpretation was not consciously accepted by Gandhi. Radhakrishnan brings out this meaning when he says that satyagraha means Truth-force 'that' which is and can never be destroyed or negated for reality cannot frustrate itself. The gates of hell shall not prevail.<sup>3</sup>

Vinoba also considers truth as the basic principle. "The world is sustained by truth. It subsists because there is more truth in the world than untruth. If untruth acquires predominance over truth, the world

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would come to an end.<sup>4</sup> A satyagrahi knows that "Man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore not competent to punish."<sup>5</sup>

Satyagraha stands for a ceaseless and relentless pursuit of truth without resorting to hatred, rancor, ill will or animosity. Gandhi defined satyagraha as the "vindication of truth, not by the infliction of suffering on the opponent but one's own self".<sup>6</sup> Any body practising satyagraha must not, therefore, aim at embarrassing or coercing the opponent in the conflict to do something or to concede something in favour of the satyagrahi. Any such attempt would detract the satyagrahi from the path of truth and tempt him to resort to violence in changing his relation with the opponent and for that matter, with the entire society. While resisting the opponent the satyagrahi must act as the monitor in helping the one who resists; to decide upon the actual course of action in his fight against injustice.

Gandhi employed the technique of satyagraha for freedom in various fields. Though satyagraha is the weapon for winning political freedom, it is also a document of metaphysics and therefore, Vinoba says, "We have not only to be *Satyagrahi* but also *Satya-grahi* (receptive to truth)". Satyagraha has increasingly come to be looked upon as a moral equivalent to war. J. Bondurant has significantly observed: "Gandhi used the traditional to promote the novel; he reinterpreted tradition in such a way that revolutionary ideas clothed in familiar expression were readily adopted and employed towards revolutionary ends."<sup>7</sup>

The acceptance of Gandhi's satyagraha techniques by the Indian National Congress and especially by such scientific minded persons as Jawaharlal Nehru, Jayaprakash Narayan and others can be explained by the peculiar historical context in which Gandhi propounded his philosophy and prescribed his techniques of political as well as socio-economic actions. Gandhi abjured violence and the foundation of his non-violence was non-cooperation with evil and injustice. He taught his followers not to put up with any kind of wrong and injustice done by one individual to another, by one group to another. To him, refusal to non-cooperate with evil and injustice is tantamount to failing in duty and human obligations on the part of the individual or group injured by the wrong doer.

### **Non-Violence is not Cowardice**

Gandhi considers weakness, cowardice and fear as sin against the human spirit. Violence was a spiritual crime to Gandhi. But cowardice and heedlessness to injustice was even worse than that. He states:

You will not bow to the supremacy of the victor; you will not help him to attain his object. Herr Hitler has never dreamt of possessing Britain. He wants the British to admit defeat. The victor can then demand anything he likes from the vanquished and the latter has perforce to yield. But if defeat is not admitted, the enemy will fight until he has killed his opponent. A *Satyagrahi* is, however, dead to his body even before the enemy attempts to kill him, i.e. he is free from attachment to his body and only lives in the victory of the soul. Therefore, when he is already thus dead, why should he yearn to kill anyone? To die in the act of killing is in essence to die defeated. Because, if the enemy is unable to get what he wants from you alive, he will decide to get it after killing you. if, on the other hand, he realizes that you have not the remotest thought in your mind of raising your hand against him even for the sake of your life, he will lack the zest to kill you.<sup>8</sup>

*Satyagraha* takes three forms: non-cooperation, civil disobedience and direct action - each having a larger scope for mass-action in the order in which they have been mentioned.

Non-cooperation is withdrawal of co-operation from a corrupt government but civil disobedience is a kind of civil resistance, which involves a continuous and prolonged struggle to achieve given objectives. Direct action and civil disobedience are powerful weapons but can become dangerous if not combined with non-violence. That is why Gandhi observed: "Disobedience without civility, discipline, discrimination and non-violence is certain destruction".<sup>9</sup> He has also warned us, "Disobedience to be civil must be sincere, respectful, restrained never defiant, must be based upon some well-understood principle, must not be capricious and above all must have no ill-will or hatred behind it... *Satyagraha* is utter self-effacement, greatest humility, greatest patience and brightest faith. It is its own reward"<sup>10</sup>

Mass *satyagraha* has to be both spontaneous and organized and it is the duty of the leaders of the movement to see that the struggle is conducted peacefully and in a calm atmosphere. It is of various types - defensive, aggressive, individual, collective and mass.<sup>11</sup> Gandhi has prophetically observed that "*Satyagraha* is a struggle against compulsory co-operation, against one-sided combination, against the armed imposition of modern methods of exploitation masquerading under the name civilization."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, Gandhi called *satyagraha* a process of education, self-education and instrument for making of right public opinion. Hence, Gandhi has declared, "Just as one must learn the art of killing in the training for violence, so one must learn the art of living and dying in the training for non-violence".<sup>13</sup>

In this sense, *satyagraha* is a positive programme of action which

teaches us to suffer voluntarily and cheerfully for the sake of the total welfare of all and definitely not of any organized section or any particular individual. Gandhi all along emphasized this aspect of satyagraha because he rightly visualized that if people were permitted to oppose laws and the authority on narrow considerations of their selfish point of view, lawlessness would be the order of the day and instead of one injustice, other bigger injustices would result in society. Gandhi as a civil-resister was a firm believer in law and order. Hence, only unjust laws were to be opposed, according to him. Lawlessness was never encouraged by him. Obedience to moral law and discipline was the prime demand in his satyagraha movement.<sup>14</sup>

Gandhi himself did not rule out some continuing role for the satyagraha techniques as a weapon in the last resort even in independent India. People have frequently used the Gandhian techniques such as satyagraha, civil-disobedience, picketing and fasting, but the high ethical standard of satyagraha has not been scrupulously followed. The weapon "has become an orphan of anybody's adoption, for any purpose which an individual or group may fancy. Moreover, it is an age of atomic bombs and ballistic missiles, an age of greater violence and less cruelty, when a person who drops the atomic bomb and ballistic missiles, is not an actual witness of the horror and the destruction it perpetrates. Everything has to be done with cool thought and calculation. It is an age of ideological conflicts, in which every one aims to propagate his own way of life and mode of thought".<sup>15</sup> All this seems to make the old forms of satyagraha of Gandhi's times, which in spite of being positive in conception were negative in practice, unsuitable for today.<sup>16</sup>

Gandhi started with the science of satyagraha but did not work it out fully. He acknowledged that he had not worked out 'the science of *Satyagraha* in its entirety and that others could join him in his quest'.<sup>17</sup> Thus, he left to his successors to discover and experiment with other forms of satyagraha suited to their own genius, times and circumstances. Vinoba held that truth is the only power which can rescue the world from violence. Our education should be so designed as to develop the power of satyagraha in students.<sup>18</sup>

A satyagrahi must carry out with a willing heart all the rules of discipline as may be laid down from time to time. <sup>19</sup> Bandopadhyaya classifies satyagraha horizontally into:

1. individual satyagraha , 2. group satyagraha , 3. mass satyagraha and 4. international satyagraha.<sup>20</sup> And vertically, he has classified satyagraha into five broad categories:

1. Fasting
2. Defiance of violence

3. Self-imposed suffering other than fasting
4. Non-cooperation (including strikes)
5. Civil disobedience.<sup>21</sup>

Sometimes an attempt is made to enumerate the different stages of action involved in a successful satyagraha campaign, one step logically following another until the objective is attained. Thus, K. Shridharani makes what he regards as the first attempt to establish "a type or pattern of satyagraha", and gives a list and a diagram of thirteen successive steps (with some further ramifications) involved in a successful satyagraha.<sup>22</sup> Joan V. Bondurant, while stating that such a pattern is "applicable to a movement growing out of grievances against an established political order", summarizes the thirteen steps mentioned by Shridharani into nine.<sup>23</sup> The following is an outline presentation of these nine steps:

1. Negotiation and Arbitration
2. Preparation of the group for direct action including self discipline
3. Agitation
4. Issuing of an ultimatum
5. Economic boycott and forms of strike, including dharana (a form of sit-down strike before the opponent traditionally practiced in India)
6. Non-cooperation including voluntary exile
7. Civil disobedience
8. Usurping of the functions of government.
9. Parallel government

Satyagraha is a law of universal application of Gandhi. Beginning with the family, its use can be extended to every other circle.<sup>24</sup> It can rid society of all evils, political economic and moral.<sup>25</sup> Gandhi was the first to apply non-violence and satyagraha on a social scale. Others before him had tried these ideas on a narrow individual plane. The difference is due to technological development in the fields of communication and transport.

Satyagraha does not depend on outside help; it derives all its strength from within.<sup>26</sup> The power of satyagraha is something that is permanently available to us. If it involves suffering, we should put up with it. In fact, we should not even be conscious of undergoing any suffering. One who practises truth, finds joy in the practice.

Satyagraha means non-violent insistence on truth. Vinoba defines satyagraha as insistence on truth through love.<sup>27</sup> To hold to truth, to work for it and to suffer for it that the others may be converted to it, is the essence of satyagraha.<sup>28</sup> Insistence on truth does not mean dogmatism but a readiness to understand and to accept the truth of

the other side.<sup>29</sup> It, therefore, demands an objective attitude, an attempt to rise above one's predilections and prejudices. And since satyagraha relies not on physical power but on the superiority of moral and spiritual strength, it must be inspired by love and compassion. Satyagraha is a process of educating public opinion, such that it covers all the elements of the society and in the end makes itself irresistible.<sup>30</sup> According to Vinoba, satyagraha is a way of life and a mode of action and only in special situations a method of countering or removing some evil.<sup>31</sup>

Gandhi said, "there is no enemy in the dictionary of *Satyagraha*".<sup>32</sup> Rejecting wrong conception of satyagraha, Vinoba states, "People think that satyagraha is only conducted against an enemy. A person who feels animosity towards anybody cannot be a true satyagrahi".<sup>33</sup> He further states in his exposition: "It is not enough that there is no malice for the opponent. The test of a good satyagraha is that its very news should inspire pleasant feelings in people in general and not fear or repulsion".<sup>34</sup> Vinoba added: "People think that Satyagraha is appealing to the minds and hearts of the people through right conduct, right speech and right thought. One, who has no faith in the power of thought, is not satyagrahi".<sup>35</sup>

These days one often hears of satyagraha being resorted to against someone. It is only a matter of linguistic usage. In satyagraha, there is no such thing as 'against'. One practises satyagraha 'before' someone or 'with someone. The important thing in satyagraha is to convert the opponent. The essence of satyagraha is to have good intentions and to persuade the opponent to see your point, to carry on a dialogue patiently and to discover your own faults in the process. Often it happens that the opponent, because of imaginary self-interest or because of anger, attachment or other passions, is not ready to listen. This provides the occasion for enduring suffering and for the other disciplines of non-violence. But this provokes thinking in its turn and what follows is solely the sphere of thought. So the chief characteristic of satyagraha is to apply thought and to develop it constantly and to be ever ready to understand the thought of the opponent. Thought in the beginning, thought in the middle and thought in the end, is the necessary law of satyagraha. Thought in the beginning, thought in the end but the penance of non-violence in the middle is the contingent law of satyagraha.<sup>36</sup>

Even as a method of resistance, satyagraha is not a mode of punishing or inflicting pain on others, but a method of converting them by appealing to their better self through a process involving self-suffering. Hence, the more there is of love, friendship and compassion in it, the more effective it would prove.<sup>37</sup>

Satyagraha is not a passive phenomenon, nor is non-violence a non-dynamic state. "It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant."<sup>38</sup>

### Criticism

Robert Klitgaard has shown logically the contradictions of coercion in Gandhi's satyagraha.<sup>39</sup> "The opponent is forced to do something because of a threat to his own pay-off- a direct destructive threat pregnant with violence. Yet the doctrine of *Satyagraha* explicitly opposed any compulsion or coercion".<sup>40</sup> He thinks that Gandhi's non-violence is a social strategy. On the one hand, Gandhi considers it to be the right of every citizen to disobey unjust laws,<sup>41</sup> and on the other hand he threatens his adversary when he is disobeying the law. In principle, Gandhi does not give any place to threat, coercion and violence in his satyagraha, but in practice, all come into play.

The other criticism of Klitgaard runs as follows: "we have the paradox of civil disobedience. One side says that a particular law is unjust and thus is obligated to disobey it, while the other side realizes that some sort of legal mechanism is necessary to make ideal democracy possible, and since no man can prescribe absolute truth, one is obligated to obey the law"<sup>42</sup>

To answer this "paradox of civil disobedience", it is necessary to understand the ideal democracy according to Gandhi. There will be no need for disobedience of law in an ideal democracy because people will actively co-operate and the government will be run with the power of the people.

K. Sachidananda Murthy also has criticized Gandhi's satyagraha very minutely. According to him, "Men of the Gandhian way of thinking confuse two entirely different things with each other, namely, violence and force., They also tend to think that a concealed application of force is ethically more justifiable than an open use of it. Further, they also try to mix up spiritual with an entirely worldly type of activity, that is love mixed up with resistance for gaining material ends, which weakens both and is bound to fail."<sup>43</sup>

### The Value- oriented Dimension of Satyagraha

The aim of conflict resolution through satyagraha is to remove injustice, exploitation and the inherent wickedness of society. With the help of constructive programme, we can fulfill the aim of the reconstruction of the society. In spite of these two, there is another process going on between a satyagrahi and the adversary. This is known as the process of value-oriented involution. Each society has



its own values and ideals. Thus, it has its own culture. "Some of the values of the oppressor are bad, from the view-point of a revolutionary humanist and some are good, for every oppressor has some values in common with the oppressed".<sup>44</sup> The process of satyagraha brings about a dual revolution of both the sides- the false values are replaced by true values. Until the satyagrahi changes his wrong values he cannot resort to satyagraha. Likewise, there is a change of values in an adversary also. The exploitation by the adversary depends on what he thinks of the exploited person or group, namely, as wicked, cowardly and mean. Then he arms himself with violence. But if the exploited group resists with violence then the adoption of violence by the exploiter is reinforced and the vicious circle of violence is perpetuated. If the exploited party adopts non-violent means, the exploiter's trust in the efficacy of violence collapses. He is defeated morally and thinks of himself as wicked and violent and not the exploited. Thus his old values undergo transformation and new values are established. The society too undergoes a similar transformation and the process of revolution comes to an end. Thus change in values is the fundamental condition of social transformation. Otherwise, the revolution will neither be efficacious nor permanent. There will also be a fear of counter revolution. If values are not changed, there will be dictatorship and its coercive power to control society.

### Conclusion

Gandhi is very much misunderstood in connection with satyagraha. The constructive programme of Gandhian satyagraha is almost forgotten and, therefore, it is better to understand what Gandhi said about it. In his booklet on 'Constructive Programme', he has said, "My handling of civil disobedience without the constructive programme will be like a paralyzed hand attempting to lift a spoon"<sup>45</sup>.

R.R. Diwakar has classified satyagraha into three facets- constructive, purificatory and aggressive. All constructive activities including the fifteen-fold constructive programme of Gandhi are forms of constructive satyagraha. Those forms belong to the stage of organization and preparation of satyagraha in which love takes the form of selfless service of society. Then there are hartals, fasting, prayer and other self-denying actions which are purificatory in effect. Withholding of voluntary co-operation with evil is also purificatory in its import. These forms of satyagraha further qualify the satyagrahi to take the next step. When the satyagrahi takes the initiative in attacking the evil by a direct action of his own, such as, a deliberate breach of law, it is called aggressive satyagraha. He invites repression

and suffering and is willing to die in the attempt to remove the evil.<sup>46</sup> Even J. Bondurant has observed, "A genuine Satyagraha campaign is, throughout, active and constructive, aggressive and sympathizing."<sup>47</sup>

Satyagraha today must be of a positive kind. Satyagraha in a free and democratic country must be very clearly defined, and should be powerful and constructive in meaning. Love alone can be the mainspring of constructive satyagraha. It would be wrong to think that the greater the pressure exerted on the opponent, the stronger the satyagraha. In fact, the less the pressure and the more the element of love, the stronger the satyagraha. In this age of technology if satyagraha is turned into a way of harassment, it loses its real purpose and goals.

Gandhi could see that unless there was a positive approach even in the seemingly negative programme, the accomplishment of that programme would give rise to new dangers.

It is not that there is no scope at all for satyagraha under a democracy; that is an entirely mistaken notion. But it is equally mistaken to imagine that the negative satyagraha of pre-independence days will find much scope or exert much influence in a popular democratic set up. The satyagraha that has the potential to influence a democracy must be much more powerful, much more constructive.<sup>48</sup>

When freedom seemed to come nearer Gandhi realized the necessity of using satyagraha with great care. In 1946, he said, "Total non-violent non-cooperation has no place in popular Raj, whatever its level may be".<sup>49</sup>

Satyagraha assumes that there is good in the opponent. This is the meaning of seeing good in each man and this is the basis of satyagraha. The whole programme of Sarvodaya is based on seeing good in every man.

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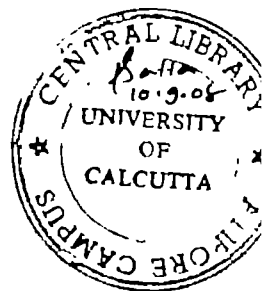
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# National Rural Employment Guarantee Act: Issues and Implications

John Moolakkattu

## Introduction

EMPLOYMENT CREATION IS an important policy instrument in low and middle-income countries where rates of unemployment and underemployment are high, the employment intensity of growth is low or is showing a downward trend, and macroeconomic shocks or natural disasters can undermine livelihoods and require income-stabilising interventions. In an era of globalisation and free markets it is seen as a means to cope with the adverse social consequences emerging from structural adjustment and the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-based economy. In such situations the public sector can emerge as an employer of the last resort. Historically, the Inca temples of Latin America and the pyramids in Egypt were public works employing thousands of people. The anti-famine programme in the UK at the turn of the 19th century, has been considered to be the first of such works in modern times.<sup>1</sup> India has a very long record of employment generation programmes and we have evidences of such employment being used by the state to prevent famine as early as the fourth and 14th centuries.<sup>2</sup> It is a key safety net and a means to food security. A larger part of civil society, including the Right to Food Campaign welcomed NREGA because of its rights-based perspective. Some commentators have even claimed that the potential of NREGA is "greater than the green revolution" and "will not be confined to the relatively better off irrigated areas".<sup>3</sup> Some others see NREGA as the "last chance of pushing for an agenda of

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enlightened state action in favour of India's marginalised."<sup>4</sup>

The basic aim of Gandhian economics is to provide full employment for the poor, really for all potential members of the work force, so that these workers can provide for their own necessities by their own efforts, in dignity, without depending on charity. It envisages the key role of manual labour and labour intensive modes of production. There is now a general belief that development-related trickling down has not happened and several other measures are needed to reduce poverty. In a recent book, Amit Bhaduri has made a very strong case for full employment in the country. He says, in a market economy, the basic requirement for poverty eradication is to ensure that the poor have purchasing power. This is not to be achieved by distributing cash to those who need it, because what people need is not cash as such, but goods and services, and these need to be produced. The way out, therefore, is to provide employment to anyone who needs it at a reasonable wage rate, and to ensure that such employment generates goods and services that will come to be demanded by those who are employed newly. Thus, in a basically market-driven economy, productive employment for the masses is the most reasonable and the surest way to lift everyone to a tolerable level of living.<sup>5</sup> NREGA has come into being after considerable amount of lobbying and pressure on the part of the civil society, NGO sector and leftist groups. It drew on the experience of the earlier wage employment programmes and significantly on the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme which has been in operation for three decades.<sup>6</sup>

Enacted in 2005 and applicable to only 200 districts initially, the NREGA has now been extended to all the 604 districts in the country, making it the largest public employment programme for poverty alleviation anywhere in the world.

### **Impact of Public Works**

Considerable work exists on the part of Indian and foreign scholars on the impact of public works programmes or workfare on poverty alleviation. Ragnar Nurkse said that such public works can accommodate surplus labour, which can in turn be used for capital formation. Here Nurkse follows classical economists such as Hume (and Keynes as well) when he notes that in his view "labour is the real source of wealth," and the supply of capital, we now see, can be increased by making use of unemployed labour. It can be increased, not only for extensive, but also for intensive investment for economic development."<sup>7</sup> Drawing on evidence from India and Bangladesh, Ravallion concludes that public works are among the most cost-effective measures for poverty alleviation.<sup>8</sup> As progress in achieving

the Millennium Development Goals has been slow in many developing countries, public job creation is a policy option to speed up the process.

Mihir Shah sees the connection between public investment in employment and its effect on private investment thus:

Public investment that aims to increase the labour-supporting capacity of these farms through massive rainwater harvesting, soil conservation and treatment of their catchment areas could set up a virtuous cycle of growth that is both environmentally and financially sustainable. Even the smallest increment of public investment in local water conservation can lead to a dramatic rise in agricultural productivity and employment. What is more, it can further catalyse successive rounds of private investment by farmers, once they are freed from the endless cycle of debt. It has been long established that there is a powerful complementarity between public and private investment in Indian agriculture. This is the central logic of the big push argument. Once the pre-conditions (such as healthier catchments and productivity-raising watershed works) are in place, even poor farmers have the incentive to undertake private investments on their farms.<sup>9</sup>

Generally, in the developing countries, poverty reduction takes place either through public works programmes or employment guarantee schemes and social assistance. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) emerging from the Act combines sound economic logic and political economy. It may be noted that the defeat of the NDA government in 2004, despite its campaign centred around the theme of 'India shining', as well as the electoral reverses of Telugu Desam in Andhra Pradesh in the last elections and the S.M. Krishna-led Congress in Karnataka could be attributed to the impact of their economic policies on the rural areas. In this context, John Echeverri-Gent writes about the general positive effects of the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee scheme (EGS):

... the EGS offers something for everybody. The rural poor receive employment. Cities reduce overcrowding. Cultivators profit from the creation of agricultural infrastructure and freedom from traditional obligations. Politicians benefit from EGS because it provides them with a progressive image, not to mention an abundant source of patronage. The industrial dynamism of the state makes financial support for the programme tolerable. As a result, the EGS enjoys widespread support and immense popularity.<sup>10</sup>

### **Salient Features of NREGA**

The NREGS aims to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment every year for at least one adult member of a household

willing to do unskilled manual labour at the stipulated minimum wage rate of each state. But this minimum of 100 days is the current maximum. The intention is to create durable assets and livelihood resource bases on which the poor rely upon. A prioritised list of allowable works is to be prepared by the state level apex council. Wages can be paid in cash, in kind or in combination, with the cash component to be not less than one fourth of the wages. Employment is to be provided within five kilometres of the applicant's residence. If work cannot be provided within 5 kilometres for some reason, then it has to be in the same Block, and in such cases, an additional 10 percent of the wage is to be paid to the worker to meet transport and incidental expenses. If five or more than five children accompany working mothers to the work site, a woman worker shall look after children and get paid from the NREGS funds. Deduction up to a maximum of 5 percent of the wages can be made for insurance or social security scheme contribution. A National Employment Guarantee Fund and a State Employment Guarantee Fund (for matching contributions) will be created. The centre would make full payments of wages of unskilled workers, three-fourths of the cost of materials including wages of skilled and semi-skilled workers and a certain percentage of the total cost as well as the salaries of programme officers, support staff and work site facilities.

If the work cannot be provided within two weeks, unemployment allowance will have to be paid, the cost of which has to be borne by the state. In other words, failure to meet supply of employment in accordance with the demand would impact on the state's resources. In addition, states will have to fund one fourth of the material costs and skilled and semi-skilled workers and the administrative expenses of the State Council. There is a complete ban on contractors in the NREGS, which is a break from the past. Worksite facilities include worksite shelter, first aid, drinking water and crèche. There is considerable emphasis on right to information and use of information technology. There are National Employment Guarantee Council, State Employment Guarantee Councils, District Programme Coordinators and Programme Officers appointed by the state government and the Gram Panchayat(GP) to oversee implementation at different levels. The GP will identify, execute and monitor the implementation of projects taking into account the suggestions of the Gram sabha. There will be social audit conducted by the Gram Sabha. Like in the original Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme envisaged by V.S. Page (which was not implemented in the state) NREGA makes the GPs the main implementing agency. The Panchayat Raj Institutions or PRIs (the main implementing agency) have never before seen so much of



funds being transferred to them. But the support structure needed by PRIs to optimally utilise these funds is still lacking. Self-targeting is expected to take care of problems of inclusion. In other words, a person can decide whether he needs to do manual labour. By keeping the wage rate below the market rate, the scheme hopes to attract the really needy. No person can be prevented from participating in the scheme on the basis of indicators based on means. This leaves out lot of complications relating to the selection of beneficiaries under the programme and the administrative costs and delays involved. Mahendra Dev tells us that under the income-based means test scheme of selection of the workers, they would be better off by remaining poor with attendant costs on society. It also does not have the stigma attached to means-tested targeting of beneficiaries given its universal approach.<sup>11</sup>

Jean Drèze, one of the key architects of NREGA 2005, and a member of the National Advisory Council estimates that guaranteeing 100 days of employment per poor household in India will cost Rs 40,000 crores per year at 2004–05 prices, or 1.3% of GDP. Once the programme gets under way, it is expected that the number of poor households will decrease, and with GDP rising, the program could be modified to guarantee employment to every adult instead of every household, or to increase the cap to more than 100 days per year. The programme is targeted at labour-intensive work in the field of environmental conservation and restoration, involving asset-creating public works such as watershed development, land regeneration, prevention of soil erosion, and restoration of tanks.<sup>12</sup> It is hoped that NREGS will stop the process of migration to the urban areas considerably.

The integration of previous employment programmes into NREGS has kept budget allocations at a level comparable to the budgets in the earlier years contrary to the expectations of the detractors of the programme. Pinaki Chakravarty says: “ Since the flow of resources to individual states is based on approved plans outlining employment demand, it may turn out to be regressive for the poorer states with low organizational capacity in terms of planning and management of the schemes, especially labor demand forecasting.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Employment as a Right**

Even as we harp on freedom, we also stress social and economic rights. Perhaps the most important socio-economic rights that have drawn attention in recent years are the right to food and employment. In the 40s and 50s there was hardly any focus on the right to work although the need for full employment was emphasized. But there was no

consensus on how it should be achieved. The lack of consensus about the state's responsibilities on right to work and the appropriate trade off with other socio-economic objectives makes the right to work problematic as a goal. The right to work has emerged as a corollary of right to development, which was instrumental in making a surge for a host of third generation rights.<sup>14</sup> Right to employment was also crucial for right to food. Unlike in the past NREGA confers statutory rights that are justiciable. This guarantee of work all across the country, unless supported by separate and assured funds, could potentially cut into the funds for education, healthcare and other sectors, which are also equally important for the removal of deprivation. The NREGA is a significant step toward realising the right to work, which has been one of the goals of our Constitution found in the Directive Principles of State Policy.

### Achievements

Despite the criticism emerging from the audit reports, Dreze and his associates found no evidence to support the argument that the whole of NREGS-funds are going down the drain. Surveys have shown that even in states like Orissa and Jharkand where considerable leakage of funds still persist, the situation is changing and the vested interests are increasingly finding it difficult to cope with the checks imposed by the Act.

A national overview of two years of NREGS(2006-08) provides the following figures<sup>15</sup>

|                         | 2006-07<br>(Upto March)   | 2007-08<br>(Upto December) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Employment<br>Demanded  | 2.12 Crores<br>Households | 2.61 Crores<br>Households  |
| Employment<br>Provided  | 2.10 Crores<br>Households | 2.57 Crores<br>Households  |
| Persondays<br>Generated | 90.5 Crores               | 85.51 Crores               |
| SC                      | 22.95 [25.35%]            | 23.29 [27.23%]             |
| ST                      | 32.98 [36.44%]            | 26.56 [31.06%]             |
| Women                   | 36.79 [40.65%]            | 37.72 [44.11%]             |

|                  |                                                   |                                                   |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Others           | 34.56 [38.18%]                                    | 35.67 [41.71%]                                    |
| Works taken up   | 8.35 Lakhs                                        | 12.31 Lakhs                                       |
| Use of resources | Rs. 8823.35 Crores<br>(73% of Available<br>Funds) | Rs. 9105.74 Crores<br>(60% of Available<br>Funds) |

### Gender Dimensions

Many public employment programmes are known for the benefits they bestow on women.<sup>16</sup> NREGS has several gender dimensions such as one third of the beneficiaries are to be women, ensuring of locally available employment, equal pay for men and women and space for child care at the worksite. Women's participation in the scheme is over 40 percent at the national level with the southern states accounting for very high rates. Whether equal wages have been paid or not is yet to be explored. In some states like Kerala, NREGA works have come to be stigmatised as women's jobs unworthy for men. Unless NREGS works contribute to the upsetting of the sexual division of labour, they would not have much impact on women's strategic gender needs. The worksite should ideally provide some space for creating greater equality between the sexes. Gender in employment guarantee schemes is focussed on two areas. The first relates to women's equitable access to jobs. In countries like India, although by law women have equal access, the structural conditions may not allow them such access. The second relates to the design of projects in such a way that the assets created and the services delivered are focussed on poor women.<sup>17</sup> A study conducted in Tamil Nadu found that women constitute more than 80 percent of the NREGS workers. But the need for child care facilities has been felt in the state given the fact that most of the workers are young mothers.<sup>18</sup> The earnings of a woman are critical for her as well as her family. The improvement in the health status of women would automatically impact on the health of children. There is also a bias against single women in the scheme, which may not be justifiable from a gender perspective.

### Possible Impact

The impact of employment creation on agricultural production, labour markets, asset creation, and sustainable poverty reduction as well as funding, design and implementation issues need to be closely examined. NREGS should not have a negative impact on agriculture. Where the statutory wage rate is higher than the market rate, which is not the case in most of the states in India, there is likelihood of

labour migration to NREGS works. Impact of NREGS on local wage rate, labour demand and supply, workers rights and intra-household impact on women's independent incomes, nature of assets created, the affinity that women have with these assets are all crucial considerations.

We need to ensure that the self-targeting by the participants in the programme does not lead to inclusion of the rich and exclusion of the really poor. In a country like India caste is one of the sources of inclusion and exclusion. At the same time the minimum wage paid should not amount to a form of exploitation of the poor. The real value of incomes transferred through the NREGS to the workers in the form of wages in the midst of price rise could decline. At the moment there is uniform wage rate within a state. This also causes lot of problems. In some areas, the market wages would be relatively high making the EGS unattractive. Maharashtra is the only state which has a differential wage rate region wise. For NREGS to succeed, employment planning is of crucial importance. Employment planning is "not only with respect to the identification of projects, their timing and so on, but also planning employment in such a way that they do not upset but complement the already available jobs in the rural sector."<sup>19</sup>

It also may be noted that despite the fear that it would occupy a significant share of the GDP, the low current absorption of funds does not seem to justify these fears. But in the future, if the scheme is implemented optimally in a good number of districts, the budgetary strain is going to be high.

Mihir shah talks about 6 positive outcomes of NREGA if implemented properly:

If effectively implemented, NREGA would ensure .... that the employment guarantee would not merely provide relief in times of distress, it would also be a move towards long-term drought and flood-proofing of Indian agriculture; two, this would shift the economy on to a more sustainable growth path, less vulnerable to the vicissitudes of nature; three, this growth will be a more effective instrument for reducing poverty because we now know that the impact of growth on poverty is higher in areas where social infrastructure is more developed; four, the number of people who depend on a state-sponsored employment guarantee would steadily decline over time. As the condition of their farms improves, people will no longer need to look for work under NREGA; five, the expenditure incurred on the employment guarantee would be non-inflationary because it will spur agricultural growth upon whose foundation a whole range of sustainable livelihoods could be built; and six, by fuelling successive rounds of private investment, it will also set up a multiplier

of secondary employment opportunities.<sup>20</sup>

### **Transparency Measures**

One of the ways in which corruption is sought to be minimised is to separate the payment agency from the implementing agency. But bank payment in itself cannot eliminate corruption. Payment is made through bank or post office accounts in public, in front of all the workers. This would help prevent fudged entries in the muster rolls. Orissa is one state that has introduced this separation, but not with much success because of its incompleteness. It is the same Panchayat officials who prepare the muster rolls, then write cheques and sanction payment from the bank. Remnants of the old contractor system exist, so also the percentage system. Bank accounts act as a check against intermediaries coming in; it encourages transparency and also contributes to saving habit. However, bank reluctance has been reported due to the excess burden involved, making payments delayed by a minimum of 15-20 days. Often they come to know about the money only from contractors who have better access to the Panchayat officials. Where bank payment was introduced, "a degree of adhocism has appeared with respect to maintaining muster rolls and job cards"<sup>21</sup> which are important transparency safeguards. It has been suggested that instead of multiplicity of documents, the job card could serve as a multi-function card like a smart card alternating also as the bank pass book.<sup>22</sup>

Unlike Orissa, Andhra Pradesh (AP) is one state that has succeeded in separating the implementing and payment agency by making officials not deal with money. Also, they have integrated the muster rolls and job cards maintenance and payment through post offices – informing the workers when money is credited through pay slips.<sup>23</sup> In the use of information technology also AP has made considerable gains. All stages of NREGA work, from registration of workers to issue of job cards, preparation of work estimates to muster rolls can be computerized for greater efficiency. It also opens up NREGA for public scrutiny, thus engendering greater transparency. Tamil Nadu has initiated a system of muster roll maintenance, whereby each labourer has to enter her signature or thumb impression in the muster roll every day by way of marking attendance. This ensures that the muster roll is available for public scrutiny at the worksite.<sup>24</sup>

### **Problem Areas**

Common issues identified from field studies undertaken by researchers and NREGA activists cite non-issue or faulty design of job cards, irregularity in the maintenance of muster rolls, discrepancy in records

relating to job cards and muster rolls, non-receipt of applications, non-payment of wages, non-availability of muster rolls on worksites, poor facilities at work places, mismatch between muster rolls and attendance registers, non-possession of job cards by beneficiaries, inadequate women's participation, problems relating to work measurement and violation of Minimum Wages Act. Other problems include too low wages for certain types of works, no special wages for hard works such as earthen works in summer when the soil is hard, deduction of a small percentage as service charge by the banks where payment is made through them, gap between the end of one work and the commencement of the next, non-supply of tools for work, payment of field assistant salary from NREGA wages and not from the management costs of NREGA, poor workplace facilities, absence of crèche, payment for getting job cards, and so on. Surreptitious entry of contractors and use of labour displacing machinery also have been reported. But compared to earlier works, their presence is considerably less. There is also the allegation that works such as water conservation, irrigation systems, afforestation, land development, roads and flood control would benefit the wealthier sections. We have several reports of social audits being conducted in different parts of the country which bring out the achievements and drawbacks of NREGA implementation in different states.<sup>25</sup>

The average number of days of employment was far below the guarantee of 100 days. There does not seem to be any case in the country where an unemployment allowance has been paid. The reason for this is that labourers have no proof of having applied for work as no dated receipts are given to applicants for employment enabling them to make a claim. In many parts of the country there is little community mobilization that results in making demands upon the state and its machinery. Illiteracy makes corruption easier when post-masters and local officials give less money to the labourer than is reflected in their post office passbooks. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, for example, despite elaborate and systematic computerization, social audits have revealed the presence of corruption in the preparation of muster rolls and payment of wages. In many north Indian states, panchayat offices do not function on a regular basis. For example, in Jharkand, no elected Panchayats are in place.<sup>26</sup> Strengthening the governance of the scheme and building suitable local capacities will remain one of the major challenges ahead.

Major improvements could be achieved by learning from recent experiences of effective record maintenance and monitoring in states such as Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. In Rajasthan, for instance,

contractors have virtually disappeared from NREGA and mass fudging of muster rolls is a thing of the past. Andhra Pradesh is also making rapid strides in this direction through strict record-keeping, institutionalised social audits and the payment of wages through post offices.<sup>27</sup> Andhra now holds an average of 64 audits a month. Details of government expenditure on NREGS are verified, assets developed are assessed and information on the NREGS is shared with village communities. Audit findings are shared in the presence of local government officials and politicians. Andhra's experiment is unique in that "it marks the first time in independent India's history that the government has willingly opened its doors to public scrutiny and done so by proactively mobilising communities".<sup>28</sup> Rajasthan has evolved methods to prevent cheating in measurement and wage calculation, which often leaves the worker with a wage far below the minimum wages. The government collaborated with the *Rozgar Evum Suchna Ka Adhikar Abhiyaan*, a coalition of civil society organisations in Rajasthan to develop a decentralised work site management system. All labourers were kept informed of the total quantum of work that needed to be completed for them to access the minimum wage.

## **Conclusion**

I would like to conclude this short discussion by saying that NREGS has the potential to lead to the empowerment of the poor people and usher in greater democratization if the opportunities thrown up by the scheme are put to effective use. It can also contribute to improvements in governance in an incremental manner. Careful identification of assets to be created is necessary to ensure that they are capable of having multiplier effects on the rural economy. The Act should be seen in terms of entitlement or right, and people have to be made aware of its implications. The extent of mobilization and awareness building as well as creative conflict that emerges in its wake will determine the success of the NREGS. Governmental effort both in vertical and horizontal terms need to be combined with initiatives and interventions on the part of civil society to make the scheme effective. When it is implemented properly, it can also strengthen panchayat Raj and contribute to democratic deepening. Given the provision for social audit, it can create pressures for strengthening the Gram sabha which remains a fledgling institution even in states that have made considerable progress in decentralization. How best the programme can be designed to ensure the maximum of returns to the workers by reducing the other costs for their participation is crucial. The NREGS provides sufficient space for innovations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the programme.

The employment scheme should not lead to a situation in which the long-term employment is displaced with short-term lower paid employment, which can be addressed by carrying out the works in sectors that are growing. Like the Expanded Public Works Programme of South Africa, the NREGS could also be implemented by all departments of government rather than being confined to the rural development department.

The impact of NREGS will differ from state to state. In a state like Maharashtra where many projects have already been implemented under EGS the identification of newer projects will require a high degree of creativity and innovative thinking. Same could be said of Kerala after the people's planning programme. Kerala has been demanding changes in the NREGA rules to allow the scheme to be used for boosting her agriculture sector, which has been undergoing a crisis in recent years. Such flexibilities may be necessary to ensure that funds are not allocated in a perfunctory manner to satisfy central guidelines.

Further, recent electoral reversals in states like Karnataka should not be interpreted as a rejection of the NREGA at the public level. The need to make the project independent of electoral calculations and see it as an investment in political development is urgent. Finally, NREGA's success depends on the of mobilization of people and the vigilance observed by them at the ground level. If carefully planned, NREGS can become a nodal point for the spawning of other movements for taking up issues related to minimum wages and gender, including domestic violence. The transparency, social audit and e-governance provisions are also powerful safeguards to prevent corruption and achieve participant control of the scheme at different stages. In GPs that are starved of funds, the NREGS offers some fresh air, and this is likely to enhance the profile of the GPs throughout the country, particularly in those states where it is the weakest in the three-tier Panchayat structure. Despite the fact that more than a decade has passed since the new Panchayat system has been introduced in most states, the NGOs are yet to develop close interaction with these bodies. The NREGS offers greater opportunities for advocacy on behalf of the people than in any other scheme. Likewise such activism can also lead to conflict and violence. Although India has wide experience in implementing employment generation schemes, the NREGS managers could also learn from the experience of other countries like Argentina and South Africa.<sup>29</sup>



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# Methodology for Ranking of NREGS Districts: Some Leads from Kerala

*Jos Chathukulam  
K. Gireesan*

## Introduction

THE GOVERNMENT OF India enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in September 2005. It addresses mainly the rural poor and their fundamental right to work with dignity. It also empowers local citizens to play an active role in the implementation of the scheme through Gram Sabhas, social audits, participatory planning and other means. The Act came into force initially in 200 districts and during 2007-08, it was extended to 330 districts. In April 2008, its coverage was extended to the whole country.

NREGA has come into force from February 2, 2006 in two Districts in Kerala - Palakkad and Wayanad. The basic objective of the scheme is to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The work guarantee can also serve other objectives like generating productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing migration to urban areas and fostering social equity, among others.

During May – July 2007, an impact assessment study of Palakkad and Wayanad Districts was commissioned by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. The study was aimed at

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analyzing the systems and processes that emerged during the initiation and execution of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in the State.

According to the operational guidelines of NREGS, the monitoring process should include an annual ranking of districts in terms of their performance in implementing the scheme. Such ranking makes it possible to make comparisons between districts, which can contribute to competition.

The focus of this paper is to construct a set of indicators for developing a suitable methodology for ranking of NREGS districts. Using the indicators identified, an effort has been made to rank two NREGS districts in Kerala. The paper also attempts to highlight the limitations of the methodology and the possibility of replicating the same in other states.

### ***Methodology***

The list of indicators for ranking of districts has been prepared taking into account the systems and processes of NREGS governance in the state. They are primarily drawn from the schedules canvassed at the field level. Moreover, the inputs from Quantitative Assessment, Qualitative Assessment and Process level assessment also have been taken care of during the exercise. In certain cases, interactions with the elected members, officials and observations from the field have also provided the necessary inputs for ranking.

### ***Process of Ranking***

The indicators for assessment used in the process of ranking have been broadly divided into those related to operationalisation and impact of NREGS. An attempt has been made to separate quantitative and qualitative aspects of operationalisation during the exercise. It is noted that the aspects in the section 'Impact of NREGS' contain both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, but they are given separately for a focussed analysis of the scheme as well as for follow-up. Ranking of the districts in Kerala against each indicator has been given in Table 1.

From the available 44 indicators, Wayanad District scored first in respect of 25 Indicators, whereas Palakkad District came first in respect of 19 indicators. Direct and indirect interactions and responses from the elected members of PRIs, MLAs, State level officials, Vice-Chairperson of State Planning Board, leaders of political parties, media reports etc., corroborate our final ranking of the NREGS districts in Kerala.

Table-1  
Ranking of NREGS Districts

| SL No.    | Description                                           | Ranking of District |         |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------|
|           |                                                       | Palakkad            | Wayanad |
| <b>A.</b> | <b>Quantitative Aspects</b>                           |                     |         |
| 1.        | Physical Performance                                  | 2                   | 1       |
| 2.        | Financial Performance                                 | 2                   | 1       |
| <b>B.</b> | <b>Qualitative Aspects</b>                            |                     |         |
| 3.        | NREGS Management                                      | 1                   | 2       |
| 4.        | Infrastructure Facilities                             | 1                   | 2       |
| 5.        | Staffing                                              | 1                   | 2       |
| 6.        | Capacity Building of Personnel                        | 1                   | 2       |
| 7.        | Awareness Building and Demand Generation              | 2                   | 1       |
| 8.        | Registration                                          | 2                   | 1       |
| 9.        | Planning                                              | 2                   | 1       |
| 10.       | Job Cards                                             | 2                   | 1       |
| 11.       | Norms for Application of Work                         | 2                   | 1       |
| 12.       | Transparency in Sanction of Works                     | 2                   | 1       |
| 13.       | Transparency in Implementation of Works               | 2                   | 1       |
| 14.       | Ratio between Wages and Non-Wages                     | 2                   | 1       |
| 15.       | Less Use of Machinery                                 | 1                   | 2       |
| 16.       | Development of Systems to Facilitate Scheme Execution | 1                   | 2       |
| 17.       | Monitoring and Supervision of Works                   | 2                   | 1       |
| 18.       | Maintenance of Records                                | 1                   | 2       |
| 19.       | Financial Management                                  | 1                   | 2       |
| 20.       | Grama Sabha and People's Participation                | 2                   | 1       |
| 21.       | Accountability Mechanism                              | 2                   | 1       |
| 22.       | Grievance Redressal Mechanism                         | 1                   | 2       |
| 23.       | Worksite Facilities                                   | 1                   | 2       |
| 24.       | Payment of Wages within 7 days                        | 2                   | 1       |
| 25.       | Average Work per Person                               | 1                   | 2       |
| 26.       | Participation of Women Workers                        | 1                   | 2       |
| 27.       | Participation of SC Workers                           | 1                   | 2       |
| 28.       | Participation of ST Workers                           | 2                   | 1       |

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|                           |                                                      |          |          |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|
| 29.                       | Participation of Beneficiaries of Land Reforms/IAY   | 2        | 1        |
| 30.                       | Participation of Disabled Beneficiaries              | 2        | 1        |
| 31.                       | Increase in Average Income of Beneficiary Households | 1        | 2        |
| 32.                       | Ownership by the Panchayats                          | 2        | 1        |
| 33.                       | Role of Political Parties                            | 2        | 1        |
| 34.                       | Role of Civil Society Organisations                  | 2        | 1        |
| <b>C. Impact of NREGS</b> |                                                      |          |          |
| 35.                       | Durability of Assets Created                         | 1        | 2        |
| 36.                       | Quality of Work                                      | 1        | 2        |
| 37.                       | Income and Employment on a Sustainable Basis         | 2        | 1        |
| 38.                       | Reducing Household Indebtedness                      | 2        | 1        |
| 39.                       | Checking Migration                                   | 2        | 1        |
| 40.                       | Soil Conservation                                    | 2        | 1        |
| 41.                       | Water Conservation                                   | 1        | 2        |
| 42.                       | Afforestation Works                                  | 1        | 2        |
| 43.                       | Agricultural Productivity                            | 1        | 2        |
| 44.                       | Overall Development of the Village                   | 2        | 1        |
|                           | <b>Final Ranking</b>                                 | <b>2</b> | <b>1</b> |

Source: Field Survey

### ***Rationality of Ranking and Discussions***

Subjective element was consciously reduced to enhance the quality of the ranking process. Each of the indicators used for ranking could be discussed under three heads. This includes two indicators that are quantitative, thirty two indicators that are qualitative and ten impact-related indicators which could be quantitative, qualitative or a combination of both.

#### ***A. Quantitative Aspects***

1. Physical Performance : Primarily three aspects have been taken up for ranking. This includes ratio of works taken up and completed, ratio of households demanding employment and being provided with, and number of households securing 100 days of employment. It is noted that 90.53 percent of works initiated have been completed in Wayanad, whereas in Palakkad, the figure stands at 68.39 percent. Nearly 97 percent of households that demanded



employment in Palakkad were provided with work, whereas in Wayanad, it was 92.3 percent. 282 beneficiary households in Wayanad and 255 in Palakkad could achieve the scheme objective of being provided with 100 days of employment.

2. Financial Performance: Percentage of utilisation of funds and percentage of expenditure on unskilled wages have been considered. In Wayanad, 82.4 percent of funds sanctioned was utilised and 94.1 percent of the expenditure was in the form of wages for the unskilled workers, whereas in Palakkad, 64.1 percent of the funds was utilized, of which 84.8 percent was for wages of the unskilled.

### ***B. Qualitative Aspects***

A total of 32 indicators have been covered in this section.

1. NREGS Management: Interactions with the elected members and officials responsible for the scheme implementation at various levels (District/Block/Gram Panchayat) was undertaken for assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of NREGS management.
2. Infrastructure Facilities: This includes the availability of facilities like computer, internet access, furniture, etc. at the NREGS cell in the Gram Panchayats. Functional status of the facility and its usage has been an important aspect considered for the assessment.
3. Staffing: This relates to availability of staff (both technical and administrative) for scheme execution at the field levels (Block/Gram Panchayat).
4. Capacity Building of Personnel: This covered the number of training sessions organised, topics and effectiveness of sessions held for different stakeholders in both the districts.
5. Awareness building and demand generation: Measures taken for awareness building and demand generation among the rural poor have also been taken into consideration. In Wayanad 64.74 percent of total households issued with job cards demanded wage employment, whereas in Palakkad, the corresponding figure is 40.75 percent only.
6. Registration: Conduct of registration through a specially convened Gram Sabha, calling out the name of registered persons during the Gram Sabha, and number of persons yet to be covered under the scheme etc., have been considered here.
7. Planning: An assessment of the systems and processes of planning was made based on the interactions with the elected members officials, beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, opinion leaders. better.
8. Job Cards: Aspects like preparation and issue of job cards in a transparent manner, availability of job cards in time, cases of non-receipt of job cards etc., have been considered here.
9. Work-related details: Display of works in GP notice boards, provision of work within 15 days of demand, roaster system for work allocation, etc. have been covered under this head.

10. Transparency in Sanction of Works: Selection of works from the shelf of works proposed by the Gram Sabha, preparation of estimate by the technical staff in consultation with the residents of the area, and updating of Gram Panchayat notice board with the list of works sanctioned are indicators of transparency in sanction of works.
11. Transparency in Implementation of Works: Provision of board with details of the job at the worksites, conduct of an open project meeting before commencement of the work, availability of muster rolls at the work site, conduct of daily measurements at the worksites, conduct of final measurement by the technical staff transparently, photographs at various stages of work and conduct of open project meeting after the work completion have been considered to assess transparency in implementation of works.
12. Ratio between Wages and Non-wages: From the total expenditure, the ratio between wage and non-wage component has been calculated. It is noted that the ratio between wages and non-wages in Wayanad is 94: 6 whereas in Palakkad it is 85:15.
13. Intensity of Use of Machinery: The less intense the use of machinery, the better.
14. Development of Systems to Facilitate Scheme Execution: Unlike in Wayanad, in Palakkad, several systems, institutions and practices were evolved.
15. Monitoring and Supervision of Works: Some of the aspects like formation and functioning of Vigilance and Monitoring Committees (VMC) and effectiveness of worksite supervision are also equally useful as a measure. In Wayanad VMCs were constituted in majority of the cases (64 %), whereas it was only 14 percent in Palakkad.
16. Maintenance of Records: Perusal of records/registers and cross-verification of reliability of data maintained at various levels showed that maintenance of records in Palakkad is relatively better.
17. Financial Management: Different financial practices are being adopted in both the districts. In Palakkad, 15 separate bank accounts at as many nationalised and scheduled banks are being operated by the Joint Programme Co-ordinator (JPC), which work as controlling banks at the district level. The Panchayats are asked to open their NREGS account in any of the banks from the given list. As and when the payment bills are submitted by the Panchayats at the local bank, money will be channelised from the controlling bank at the district level. Request for subsequent funds from the GPs are forwarded through Block Programme Officer and the funds are made available without any delay. Understandably, a close financial monitoring is possible due to this procedure in Palakkad. However, in Wayanad, the JPC is operating only two accounts in the same bank - one for NREGS execution and the other for training.
18. Grama Sabha and People's Participation: Participation of beneficiaries in a special Grama Sabha for preparation of shelf of works has been better in Wayanad.

19. **Accountability Mechanism:** This includes measures such as conducting of social audit.
20. **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** It is found that in Palakkad quick action on complaints/grievances is being taken as noted from the complaint registers available at the offices in the District.
21. **Worksite Facilities:** Availability of drinking water at the worksites, presence of first aid kit, provision of medical aid to the injured workers etc., can also be seen as useful for ranking.
22. **Payment of Wages within 7 days:** The percent of the beneficiaries who received their wages in the stipulated period of seven days also can be used for inter-district ranking. In Wayanad, 12.2 percent beneficiaries received their wages within 7 days whereas in Palakkad, it was 1.2 percent only.
23. **Average Number of Days Worked:** On an average, an NREGS worker in Palakkad received 40.7 days of employment, whereas his/her counterpart in Wayanad received 37.8 days.
24. **Participation of Women Workers:** It is noted that 87 percent of workers in Palakkad and 69 percent in Wayanad are women.
25. **Participation of SC Workers:** Participation of SC workers, taking into consideration the share of the SCs in the total population in the District, is an indicator of the extent to which the scheme is really reaching the poor and the marginalized.
26. **Participation of ST Workers:** This factor also should be reckoned for the same reasons as above.
27. **Participation of Beneficiaries of Land Reforms/Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) :** It has been found that participation of beneficiaries of land reforms/IAY in the scheme is better in Wayanad.
28. **Participation of Disabled Beneficiaries:** Since the scheme is concerned with issues relating to inclusion and exclusion, the extent to which the disabled can benefit from the scheme is crucial.
29. **Increase in Average Income of Beneficiary Households:** The calculations were made based on the responses of beneficiaries from both the districts, considering their annual family income in pre and post-NREGS scenario. It is found that there is an improvement of annual family income of beneficiary households by 14 percent in Palakkad and 13 percent in Wayanad due to the intervention of NREGS.
30. **Ownership by the Panchayats:** The extent to which the Panchayats , particularly the Gram Panchayats own up the programme is a key indicator of its sustainability and a factor for inter-district ranking.
31. **Role of Political Parties:** The extent to which NREGS has been programmed into the local party forums is also a crucial factor.
32. **Role of Civil Society Organisations:** Civil society activism is considered necessary to enable people to access their right to employment from a sense of agency rather being passive beneficiaries of schemes.

### *C. Impact of NREGS*

In this section, 10 indicators are included for the assessment. They are either quantitative or qualitative or a combination of both.

1. **Durability of Assets:** This can be judged from the opinion of the beneficiaries. Palakkad scored much better than Wayanad with respect to asset durability. This was supported by field observation.
2. **Quality of Work:** Quality of work can be assessed by comparing them with other government projects.
3. **Income and Employment on a Regular Basis:** The survey has found that 76 percent beneficiaries from Wayanad receive income and employment on a regular basis compared to 66 percent in Palakkad.
4. **Reduction of Household Indebtedness:** The impact the NREGS has in reducing indebtedness and money lender dependency also is a key factor. In Wayanad, 86 percent beneficiaries reported reduction in household indebtedness compared to 66 percent in Palakkad.
5. **Checking Migration:** The impact of NREGS on checking migration to urban areas and other states can also serve as a useful guide to ranking.
6. **Soil Conservation:** Assessment of impact of NREGS on soil conservation is also a useful measure. It is noted that 37 percent beneficiaries in Wayanad and 22 percent beneficiaries in Palakkad vouch that the scheme brought in positive impact on soil conservation.
7. **Water Conservation:** About 58 percent beneficiaries in Palakkad and 53 percent beneficiaries in Wayanad reported that the scheme contributed to better water conservation.
8. **Afforestation Works:** The extent to which trees are planted in the common lands is a factor having implications for livelihood security of the poor.
9. **Agricultural Productivity:** About 28 percent beneficiaries in Palakkad and 20 percent beneficiaries in Wayanad reported that the scheme execution could bring in positive impact on agricultural productivity in their respective regions.
10. **Overall Development of the Village:** This has been made from the assessment of beneficiary responses from both the districts. About 83 percent beneficiaries in Wayanad reported that the scheme resulted in overall development of their village, whereas the figure stands at 69 percent in Palakkad.

### **Limitations**

Some of the important aspects like perspective plan, social audit, payment of unemployment allowance, presence of contractors during the scheme execution etc., were not considered here. Perspective plan, social audit and payment of unemployment allowance were not considered as they have not been initiated in both the districts. As

presence of contractors during the scheme execution was not found in both the districts, the same has not been considered for the ranking.

The list of factors considered here could be viewed as indicative only and they are neither exhaustive nor exclusive. We believe that the list needs to be developed and reformed according to the local situation and conditions. And during the ranking exercise, equal weightage has been given to all indicators. Some degree of subjective element in the process of ranking is inevitable in an exercise like this. Geographical features and other socio-economic peculiarities of the districts also may have an influence in ranking, for example regarding the participation of SC and ST workers. Population of the respective categories in the districts has a direct influence in this regard.

### **Conclusion**

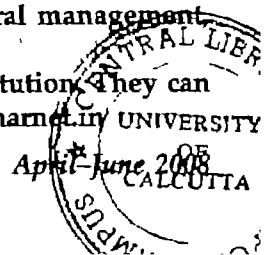
An effort has been made to put forward a methodology for ranking of two NREGS districts in Kerala using a set of indicators. More than ranking of districts, it enables the identification of the grey areas in scheme implementation in each district. Such an exercise will ultimately strengthen scheme governance in the days to come. In a similar way, one can think of developing a tool for ranking of Panchayats as well. By addressing the limitations of this exercise and by making appropriate changes keeping in view the individual context, this exercise can be replicated in other states also.

### **Acknowledgement**

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# Employment for the Tribal Communities under NREGS: The Experience of Wayanad, Kerala

*K. Gireesan  
TV Thilakan  
Jos Chathukulam*

## Introduction

THE BROAD OBJECTIVE of the paper is to analyse the factors related to employment for the tribal communities under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in Wayanad District of Kerala. Specifically, the paper seeks to:

Examine how far the NREGS has contributed to addressing the problem of unemployment among the tribal communities in the district;

Analyse the distribution of employment opportunities among different tribal communities; and,

To put forward suggestions for enabling the tribal communities to access the scheme benefits better.

## Methodology

Data was collected from two Block Panchayats (Kalpetta and Mananthavady), out of the total three blocks in Wayanad. All 17 Gram Panchayats in the selected blocks constituted the universe of the study.

Secondary data was collected from the Poverty Alleviation Unit (former DRDA), Block Programme Offices and Gram Panchayat (GP)

*April-June 2008*

offices. In most of the GPs, NREGS staff was available to provide the required details.

Primary data collection was carried out using structured schedules for beneficiaries, non-beneficiaries, officials and opinion leaders. Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were also conducted with the beneficiaries. Out of 400 beneficiaries contacted from the district, 115 were ST beneficiaries, who constitute the subject of discussion and analysis in this paper. Collection of data was carried out during May - July 2007.

### Profile of the Study Area

Wayanad District consists of three Block Panchayats and 25 Gram Panchayats, in addition to one Municipality. With a population of 7,80,619, it is the smallest district in Kerala. The district is spread over 2,132 square kilometres and accounts for about 6 per cent of the total geographical area of the state. Literacy rate in the district is 85.25 per cent. Female literacy rate in the district is lesser than that of males by nine per cent. Sex ratio in the district is 995, which is lower than the state average of 1058. The density of population is 366 persons per square kilometre, which is much lower than the state average of 819. It is the least urbanised district in the state with hardly 3.9 per cent of the population living in towns. The district has an SC population (rural areas only) of 31,101 and ST population (rural areas only) of 1,32,934. The percentage of SC population to total population in the district is 4.27 per cent, which is less than half of the state average (9.81 %). The percentage of ST population in the total population of the District is 17.43 per cent, which is much higher than the state average (1.14 %). In seven Gram Panchayats (GP) of the district, more than 20 percent of the total population belong to tribes. They are Thirunelly (40.72 %) and Panamaram (23.42 %) in Mananthavady Block; Kottathāra (27.65 %), Vengappally (24.03 %), Thariyodu (22.36 %) and Kaniyambatta (20.44 %) in Kalpetta Block; and Noolpuzha (39.29 %), Meenangadi (22.13 %) and Pulpally (20.82 %) in Sulthan Bathery Block.

A significant segment of STs (37.4 %) in the state are concentrated in the district.<sup>1</sup> Details of tribal population in all the GPs of Wayanad District are given in Table No. 1.

*Paniyar*, *Kurumar*, *Kurichiyar* and *Adiyar* are the dominant tribes living in the district. Population-wise distribution of STs in the district is given in Table 2.

*Paniyar* is the most dominant community, which accounts for about 40 percentage of the ST population in the district. *Adiyar*, *Kattunaikkar*, *Kurichiyar* and *Kurumar* jointly account for about 50 percentage of tribal population in the district.



Table-1  
Details of Tribal Population in Wayanad District

| Sl. No. | Name of the local Government       | Total Population | ST Population   | Percentage of STs to Total Population |
|---------|------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1.      | Kaniyambatta                       | 29,516           | 6,035           | 20.45                                 |
| 2.      | Kottathara                         | 16,636           | 4,600           | 27.65                                 |
| 3.      | Meppady                            | 39,849           | 3,516           | 8.82                                  |
| 4.      | Muppainad                          | 24,033           | 988             | 4.11                                  |
| 5.      | Muttill                            | 31,227           | 4,562           | 14.6                                  |
| 6.      | Padinjarethara                     | 24,823           | 2,647           | 10.66                                 |
| 7.      | Pozhuthana                         | 17,397           | 3,266           | 18.77                                 |
| 8.      | Thariyodu                          | 11,843           | 2,649           | 22.37                                 |
| 9.      | Vengapally                         | 11,072           | 2,661           | 24.03                                 |
| 10.     | Vythiri                            | 17,820           | 875             | 4.91                                  |
|         | <b>Kalpetta Block Total</b>        | <b>2,24,216</b>  | <b>31,799</b>   | <b>14.18</b>                          |
| 11.     | Edavaka                            | 31,168           | 4,910           | 15.75                                 |
| 12.     | Mananthavady                       | 45,477           | 6,819           | 14.99                                 |
| 13.     | Panamaram                          | 42,922           | 10,056          | 23.43                                 |
| 14.     | Thavinjal                          | 38,654           | 6,790           | 17.57                                 |
| 15.     | Thirunelly                         | 27,450           | 11,178          | 40.72                                 |
| 16.     | Thondernadu                        | 22,455           | 4,374           | 19.48                                 |
| 17.     | Vellamunda                         | 36,415           | 5,720           | 15.71                                 |
|         | <b>Mananthavady Block Total</b>    | <b>2,44,541</b>  | <b>49,847</b>   | <b>20.38</b>                          |
| 18.     | Ambalavayal                        | 34,345           | 4,775           | 13.9                                  |
| 19.     | Meenangadi                         | 32,067           | 7,099           | 22.14                                 |
| 20.     | Mullenkolly                        | 29,519           | 2,741           | 9.28                                  |
| 21.     | Nenmeni                            | 44,096           | 7,086           | 16.07                                 |
| 22.     | Noolpuzha                          | 26,184           | 10,288          | 39.22                                 |
| 23.     | Poothadi                           | 39,687           | 7,262           | 18.3                                  |
| 24.     | Pulpally                           | 34,293           | 7,143           | 20.83                                 |
| 25.     | Sulthan Bathery                    | 42,059           | 4,894           | 11.64                                 |
|         | <b>Sulthan Bathery Block Total</b> | <b>2,82,250</b>  | <b>51,288</b>   | <b>18.17</b>                          |
|         | <b>Kalpetta Municipality</b>       | <b>29,612</b>    | <b>3,128</b>    | <b>10.56</b>                          |
|         | <b>TOTAL</b>                       | <b>7,80,619</b>  | <b>1,36,062</b> | <b>17.43</b>                          |

Source: Census 2001

April-June 2008

Table-2  
Population-wise distribution of tribal communities

| Sl. No. | Name of the Tribe                                                                        | Percentage to the total STs in the district |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1.      | Adiyar                                                                                   | 5                                           |
| 2.      | Kattunaikkar                                                                             | 5                                           |
| 3.      | Kurichiyar                                                                               | 20                                          |
| 4.      | Kurumar                                                                                  | 20                                          |
| 5.      | Paniyar                                                                                  | 40                                          |
| 6.      | Others (Kadar, Karimpalan, Koragar, Pathinaikkan, Thachanadan, Thachanadan, Urali, etc.) | 10                                          |

*Source: Discussions with the faculty of KIRTADS<sup>2</sup> and tribal activists.*

An overview of distribution of tribal communities in different parts of the district helps us in analysing the possibilities of variations in scheme governance among different tribal communities. Panchayat-wise distribution of tribal communities in the district is given in Table 3.

Though several efforts have been made to improve the basic infrastructure in the tribal colonies, they did not have any significant impact among certain tribes like *Kattunaikkar*, *Karimpalan*, *Adiyar* and *Paniyar*. Majority of the tribal families suffer from poverty and some of them are subjected to exploitation at the work place. There are several cases of unwed mothers from tribal families exploited sexually by the non-tribals. Several cases of sickle-cell anaemia among tribal population have also been reported.<sup>3</sup>

Forests occupy about 37 per cent of the land in the district. Majority of the land (55 %) in the district is cultivated. Much of the cropped area in the district is devoted to raising perennial crops like coffee, pepper, tea, cardamom, rubber and coconut. Participation in labour force is quite high among both men and women, which is higher than the state average. Most of the workers in the district are agricultural labourers and cultivators (about 90 %). Decline in the agricultural sector has led to a lowering of the person-days generated. The crisis in the plantation sector in various parts of the district also added to their sufferings. They migrate to the nearby states in search of jobs. Ginger cultivation is one of the most important

**Table-3**  
**Distribution of Tribal communities**

| SL No. | Name of the Gram Panchayat   | Dominant tribe | Other tribes          |
|--------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
|        | <b>Mananthavady Block</b>    |                |                       |
| 1.     | Kaniyambatta                 | Paniyar        | Kurichiyar, Kurumar   |
| 2.     | Kottathara                   | Kurichiyar     | Paniyar, Karimpalan   |
| 3.     | Meppady                      | Paniyar        | Kurichiyar, Kurumar   |
| 4.     | Muppainad                    | Paniyar        | Kurumar, Kurichiyar   |
| 5.     | Muttill                      | Paniyar        | Kurumar, Kurichiyar   |
| 6.     | Padinjarethara               | Kurichiyar     | Paniyar, Kurumar      |
| 7.     | Pozhuthana                   | Paniyar        | Kurumar, Kurichiyar   |
| 8.     | Thariyodu                    | Paniyar        | Kurichiyar, Kurumar   |
| 9.     | Vengapally                   | Kurichiyar     | Paniyar, Karimpalan   |
| 10.    | Vythiri                      | Paniyar        | Kurichiyar, Adiyar    |
|        | <b>Mananthavady Block</b>    |                |                       |
| 11.    | Edavaka                      | Kurichiyar     | Paniyar, Adiyar       |
| 12.    | Mananthavady                 | Paniyar        | Adiyar, Kurichiyar    |
| 13.    | Panamaram                    | Kurichiyar     | Adiyar, Paniyar       |
| 14.    | Thavinjal                    | Kurichiyar     | Paniyar, Adiyar       |
| 15.    | Thirunelly                   | Adiyar         | Panivar, Kattunaikkar |
| 16.    | Thondernadu                  | Kurichiyar     | Paniyar, Adiyar       |
| 17.    | Vellamunda                   | Kurichiyar     | Paniyar, Kattunaikkar |
|        | <b>Sulthan Bathery Block</b> |                |                       |
| 18.    | Ambalavayal                  | Kurumar        | Kattunaikkar, Paniyar |
| 19.    | Meenangadi                   | Kurumar        | Kattunaikkar, Paniyar |
| 20.    | Mullenkolly                  | Kurumar        | Kattunaikkar, Paniyar |
| 21.    | Nenmeni                      | Paniyar        | Kattunaikkar, Kurumar |
| 22.    | Noolpuzha                    | Kurumar        | Kattunaikkar, Paniyar |
| 23.    | Poothadi                     | Kurumar        | Kattunaikkar, Paniyar |
| 24.    | Pulpally                     | Kurumar        | Kattunaikkar, Paniyar |
| 25.    | Sulthan Bathery              | Kurumar        | Kattunaikkar, Paniyar |

*Source: Discussions with faculty of KIRTADS and tribal activists.*

*April-June 2008*

activities carried out by the migrants.

The Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) was formed during the Fifth Five-Year Plan, primarily aimed at protecting tribes from exploitation by outsiders and as well as for improving their socio-economic conditions. Until the Ninth Five-Year Plan period during which People's Plan Campaign (PPC) was launched, the funds used to be handled by the SC/ST department. Since then, two thirds of the earmarked funds are kept at the disposal of the three-tier Panchayat Raj Institutions and the rest are administered through the SC/ST department.

The decentralised 'plan campaign' was aimed at transforming the already decentralised bureaucratic planning at the district level into a democratic one. Accordingly, the allocation for the district was 60 percent of the TSP funds leaving 20 per cent each for the Gram and Block Panchayats. The district level committee consisting of MLAs, members of District Panchayat belonging to SC/ST communities, senior officials, and prominent social activists is behind the formulation and implementation of all development programmes for the weaker sections. The committee was empowered to enquire into any allegations concerning the TSP. A task force chaired by the ST member to oversee the drafting of TSP was also envisaged. The sectoral guideline under the decentralised plan campaign, that a minimum of 40 per cent should be set apart for the productive sector, was relaxed for TSP, recognizing the economic and entrepreneurial lag of the tribal communities. However, these safeguards were not adhered to in practice. The district level monitoring committees were not convened regularly and have failed to monitor the TSP projects. The methodology for devolution with the larger share of the TSP being given to the District Panchayat did not produce results on expected lines. It has been found that the Village Panchayats did much better in terms of spending compared to the District and Block Panchayats.<sup>4</sup>

When the United Democratic Front government came to power, it placed the TSP at the disposal of the Director, Scheduled Tribes Development Department through an order issued in October, 2001. Slow pace of expenditure, non-compliance with procedural guidelines and lack of involvement of the beneficiaries in planning and implementation were cited as the main reasons. The previous system of district level working groups was introduced again. However, it has been stipulated that before projects are taken up, 'Oorukoottams' should be convened in the Gram Panchayat.<sup>5</sup> The TSP fund and details of its expenditure would be transparent and related documents would be made available to anybody for scrutiny. *Oorukoottam* is empowered to conduct social audit of schemes also.

The region has an active presence of all major political parties and class and mass organisations affiliated to them. The region has a good number of traditional and modern associations. Associational life in vertical organizations is stronger compared to horizontal ones. Women's associational life has been strengthened in the district through the intervention of SHGs, initiated by the *Kudumbasree* Mission of the Government of Kerala.<sup>6</sup> Wayanad lags behind the rest of the state in industrialization and in most other aspects of development.

NREGS was introduced in the district when it was reeling under poverty and unemployment, especially among the members of tribal communities. According to the available reports, majority of the tribal population (60.39 %) in the district are below poverty line (BPL).<sup>7</sup> Equal wages to men and women could not be dreamt of in the district before the introduction of NREGS. Generally, men used to get Rs. 90 and women Rs. 65 as daily wages whereas the wages under NREGS is uniformly Rs. 125.

### **Wage Employment or Self-Employment for STs: A Debate**

Wage Employment Programmes (WEP) and Self Employment Programmes (SEP) are the two major instruments for direct intervention for poverty alleviation among the poor. Different schools of thought exist, favouring one over the other. According Nilakantha Rath, a large scale programme of assured wage employment for the poor will make the relevant part of the self employment productive and worthwhile. This is based on the argument that 'the poorest of the poor' may have neither the skills, nor the capacity to bear the risks necessary for taking up asset-oriented activities under the SEPs. It is also feared that leakages from such investments and the rate of default in the repayment of loans would be high for the poorest of the poor. However, Dantawala and Indira Hirway had different arguments to cite. Dantawala does not favour a development strategy aimed at improving the lot of the poor through the creation of massive wage employment opportunities. He views that such a strategy "would pin down the poor as hewers of wood and drawers of water". He suggests that what is needed is to unearth the root causes of failure of the SEPs, and redesign and reorient them. Indira Hirway says that SEP is a major form of employment in the rural economy. She points out the malpractices that occur in WEPs. She also comments that they may accentuate the gap between the rich and the poor by strengthening the asset base of those who are relatively better off. But, Bandyopadhyay is treading a middle path between these apparently divergent views. He opines that both these programmes have a significant role to play to reduce distress and miseries arising

out of poverty among the poor. For those with no productive assets, there has to be a wage employment programme to prevent them sliding down further. And for those who have received assistance under SEP in the form of productive assets, but do not get adequate incremental income from it, supplementary income through WEP is a necessity. And for the third category of people with productive assets and some earnings, these programmes are required when they are faced with adverse market situations.<sup>8</sup>

The argument put forward by Bandyopadhyay seems to be more realistic as the attack on poverty must be a multi-pronged one. We should see that WEPs is a necessary part of the multi-pronged attack against poverty, though with varying levels of intensity of operations, taking into account space and time domains. But what is required is the optimal mix of both WEP and SEP, which will bring maximum benefits to the poor. At the same time efforts should be made to unearth the deficiencies of both the programmes by increasing transparency, accountability and organizing of social audit at regular intervals.

### **Socio-Economic Profile of the Tribal Beneficiaries**

More than two-third (69.57 %) of the tribal beneficiaries approached were women. Majority of the beneficiaries (55.65 %) fall in the age-group of 36 to 60 years. More than three-fourth (75.65 %) of the respondents were married and a significant segment of them (13.92 %) were widowed/separated. Category-wise distribution of the respondents is given in Table 4.

The largest segment of the tribal workers (46.96 %) covered in the study belonged to *Paniyar* community, followed by *Kurichiyar*, *Kurumar* and *Adiyar*. Very few beneficiaries from *Kattunaikkar* and *Koragar* participated in the survey and no beneficiary from *Karimpalan* tribe could be contacted.

Table 5 illustrates the educational status of the respondents. We can see that a large segment of them (34.78 %) are illiterates and only a small section (15.65 %) of them are matriculate and above. More than three-fourth (75.65 %) of the respondents are agricultural labourers.

Table 6 reveals that majority of the respondents (53.04 %) are either landless or have less than 10 cents of land. Only a small segment of the respondents expressed positive opinion about the value of rural development programmes. They claimed that they had received some benefits under Indira Awaas Yojana (18.26 %), Total Sanitation Campaign (14.78 %), National Old Age Pension Scheme (1.74 %) and National Maternity Benefit Scheme (0.87 %).

**Table-4**  
**Category-wise distribution**

| Category     | No. of respondents | Percentage    |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Paniyar      | 54                 | 46.96         |
| Kurichiyar   | 27                 | 23.48         |
| Kurumar      | 14                 | 12.17         |
| Adiyar       | 13                 | 11.30         |
| Kattunaikkar | 6                  | 5.22          |
| Koragar      | 1                  | 0.87          |
| Karimpalan   | —                  | —             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>115</b>         | <b>100.00</b> |

*Source: Field Survey*

**Table-5**  
**Educational Status**

| Educational Status | No. of respondents | Percentage    |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Illiterate         | 40                 | 34.78         |
| Literate           | 16                 | 13.91         |
| Primary            | 16                 | 13.91         |
| Middle             | 25                 | 21.74         |
| Matric             | 13                 | 11.30         |
| Higher             | 5                  | 4.35          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>115</b>         | <b>100.00</b> |

*Source: Field Survey*

**Table-6**  
**Land Ownership**

| Size of Land        | No. of respondents | Percentage    |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Landless            | 21                 | 18.26         |
| Less than 10 cents  | 40                 | 34.78         |
| 10 – 49 cents       | 22                 | 19.13         |
| 50 – 99 cents       | 17                 | 14.78         |
| More than 100 cents | 15                 | 13.04         |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>115</b>         | <b>100.00</b> |

*Source: Field Survey*

### **Employment generated among the ST Households**

Table 7 shows the details of the employment generated among the sample tribal households. On an average, a ST beneficiary household from the sample received 33.74 person-days of employment during the period.

### **Scheme Governance among the STs**

Table 8 provides a bird's eye view regarding the scheme governance in the District during the reference period. During 2006-07, a total of 1,01,390 households registered their names in the district, which is 63.21 percent of the total number of rural households available

**Table-7**  
**Employment generated among the sample**

|              | Number of respondents | Total employment generated | Average days of employment (person-days) |
|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Female       | 80                    | 2594.9                     | 32.44                                    |
| Male         | 35                    | 1285.5                     | 36.73                                    |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>115</b>            | <b>3880.4</b>              | <b>33.74</b>                             |

*Source: Field Survey*



**Table-8**  
**NREGS Governance in Wayanad – At a glance**

| Sl. No. | Category     | Total No. of HHs in Rural areas* | No. of HHs registered | No. of JCs Issued | No. of HHs provided with employment | Employment Generated (Person-days) |
|---------|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1.      | SCs          | 6,220                            | 7,449                 | 5,017             | 2,941                               | 72,208                             |
| 2.      | STs          | 26,587                           | 20,357                | 13,299            | 9,412                               | 2,05,093                           |
| 3.      | General      | 1,27,591                         | 73,584                | 55,840            | 31,786                              | 6,16,180                           |
|         | <b>Total</b> | <b>1,60,398</b>                  | <b>1,01,390</b>       | <b>74,156</b>     | <b>44,139</b>                       | <b>8,93,481</b>                    |

Source: *Census 2001 & NREGS progress reports from Wayanad District as on 31 March 2007.*

Note: \*Figures regarding no. of households pertaining to SC, ST and General have been worked out from Census 2001.

in the district.<sup>9</sup> Majority of the households (73.14 %) registered with the scheme in the district received job cards. More than half of the households in possession of job cards (59.52 %) were provided with employment in the district. On an average, 20.24 person-days of employment was provided to a household during the period.

Majority of the households registered in the district belonged to general category (72.57 %), followed by STs (20.07 %) and SCs (7.35 %). Regarding the issue of job cards, general category households received more than three-fourth (75.3 %), followed by STs (17.93 %) and SCs (6.77 %). Households from general category received majority (72.01 %) of employment in the district, followed by STs (21.32 %) and SCs (6.66 %). Workers from general category secured greater part of the employment generated (68.97 %), followed by STs (22.95 %) and SCs (8.08 %). On an average, a beneficiary household in the district received only 20.24 days of employment during the period. However, it is marginally better with respect to SCs (24.55 days) and STs (21.79 days) compared to general households (19.38 days).

Among the total number of tribal households in the district, more than three-fourth (76.57 %) of them were registered with the scheme. Out of those registered households, less than two-third (65.33 %)

received job cards. Among those ST households in possession of job cards, majority (70.77 %) of them received employment during the period.

Details of scheme governance among the STs (Gram Panchayat-wise) in the district has been provided in Table 9. Among the three blocks in the district, the highest percentage of tribal households (of the total) registered is in Kalpetta (80.57 %), followed by Sulthan Bathery (78.4 %) and Mananthavady (72.13 %). In majority of the GPs, more than two-third of the tribal households got registered. The lowest percentage of registration of ST households was noted in Thavinjal GP of Mananthavady Block.<sup>10</sup> Job cards were issued to more than two-third of the tribal households in majority of the GPs. Among the three blocks, Kalpetta (79.51 %) is well ahead of Sulthan Bathery (70.69 %) and Mananthavady (49.23 %). The lowest percentage of ST households issued with the job cards was in Thirunelly GP of Mananthavady Block, which has the largest ST population in the district.<sup>11</sup>

Considering the percentage of employment provided to ST households, Kalpetta Block (77.2 %) is at the top, followed by Sulthan Bathery (74.55 %) and Mananthavady (57.32 %). Panamaram and Thavinjal GPs of Mananthavady Block provided the least percentage of employment to ST households in the district.<sup>12</sup> Table 10 brings out the details of employment generated among the tribal communities in the district as on 31 March 2007.

On an average, a tribal household in the district received 21.79 days of employment during the period. Block-wise analysis of employment generated per household show that Mananthavady is well ahead with 33.75 person-days, followed by Kalpetta (19.54 person-days) and Sulthan Bathery (17.74 person-days). There is considerable variation among the GPs with respect to employment generated. Thavinjal GP in Mananthavady Block is placed at one end with 60.48 person-days per tribal household and Mullankolly GP in Sulthan Bathery Block is at the other end with only 6.48 person-days.

Though, more than three-fourth (76.57 %) of the tribal households in the district got registered with the scheme, less than two-third (65.33 %) of the registered households received the job cards. From those with job cards, only 70.77 percent received employment during the period. On an average, an ST beneficiary household in the district received just less than 22 days of work during the period, which is well below the proclaimed target of 100 days of guaranteed labour per household.

The extent to which individual tribal communities have taken

**Table-9**  
**NREGS Governance among STs**

| SL No. | Name of the Gram Panchayat         | Total No. of HHs* | No. of HHs Registered | No. of JCs Issued | No. of HHs provided with employment |
|--------|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1.     | Kaniyambatta                       | 1,207             | 812                   | 812               | 561                                 |
| 2.     | Kottathara                         | 920               | 699                   | 415               | 345                                 |
| 3.     | Meppady                            | 703               | 499                   | 499               | 320                                 |
| 4.     | Muppainad                          | 198               | 262                   | 214               | 200                                 |
| 5.     | Muttill                            | 912               | 522                   | 354               | 328                                 |
| 6.     | Padinjarethara                     | 529               | 403                   | 175               | 127                                 |
| 7.     | Pozhuthana                         | 653               | 689                   | 662               | 565                                 |
| 8.     | Thariyodu                          | 530               | 547                   | 428               | 420                                 |
| 9.     | Vengapally                         | 532               | 392                   | 288               | 135                                 |
| 10.    | Vythiri                            | 175               | 299                   | 227               | 144                                 |
|        | <b>Kalpetta Block Total</b>        | <b>6,360</b>      | <b>5,124</b>          | <b>4,074</b>      | <b>3,145</b>                        |
| 11.    | Edavaka                            | 982               | 666                   | 538               | 361                                 |
| 12.    | Mananthavady                       | 1,364             | 772                   | 291               | 236                                 |
| 13.    | Panamaram                          | 2,011             | 1,499                 | 637               | 151                                 |
| 14.    | Thavinjal                          | 1,358             | 796                   | 609               | 151                                 |
| 15.    | Thirunelly                         | 2,236             | 1,755                 | 400               | 360                                 |
| 16.    | Thondernadu                        | 875               | 582                   | 275               | 151                                 |
| 17.    | Vellamunda                         | 1,144             | 1,121                 | 790               | 619                                 |
|        | <b>Mananthavady Block Total</b>    | <b>9,969</b>      | <b>7,191</b>          | <b>3,540</b>      | <b>2,029</b>                        |
| 18.    | Ambalavayal                        | 955               | 654                   | 368               | 173                                 |
| 19.    | Meenangadi                         | 1,420             | 995                   | 762               | 441                                 |
| 20.    | Mullenkolly                        | 548               | 433                   | 428               | 415                                 |
| 21.    | Nenmeni                            | 1,417             | 1,428                 | 629               | 310                                 |
| 22.    | Noolpuzha                          | 2,058             | 1,623                 | 1,201             | 1,153                               |
| 23.    | Poothadi                           | 1,452             | 1,090                 | 710               | 385                                 |
| 24.    | Pulpally                           | 1,429             | 1,187                 | 1,132             | 1,113                               |
| 25.    | Sulthan Bathery                    | 979               | 632                   | 455               | 248                                 |
|        | <b>Sulthan Bathery Block Total</b> | <b>10,258</b>     | <b>8,042</b>          | <b>5,685</b>      | <b>4,238</b>                        |
|        | <b>Total</b>                       | <b>26,587</b>     | <b>20,357</b>         | <b>13,299</b>     | <b>9,412</b>                        |

Source: NREGS Progress reports of GPs and Blocks and field visits in Wayahad District.

Note: \* Figures worked out from Census 2001.

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**Table-10**  
**Employment Generation during NREGS among STs**

| Sl. No. | Name of the Gram Panchayat         | No. of days of employment generated | No. of HHs provided employment | Employment generated per HH* (Person-days) |
|---------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1       | 2                                  | 3                                   | 4                              | 5                                          |
| 1.      | Kaniyambatta                       | 4,757                               | 561                            | 8.48                                       |
| 2.      | Kottathara                         | 8,225                               | 345                            | 23.84                                      |
| 3.      | Meppady                            | 3,971                               | 320                            | 12.41                                      |
| 4.      | Muppainad                          | 3,478                               | 200                            | 17.39                                      |
| 5.      | Muttil                             | 3,404                               | 328                            | 10.38                                      |
| 6.      | Padinjarethara                     | 6,567                               | 127                            | 51.71                                      |
| 7.      | Pozhuthana                         | 19,647                              | 565                            | 34.77                                      |
| 8.      | Thariyodu                          | 4,345                               | 420                            | 10.35                                      |
| 9.      | Vengapally                         | 2,755                               | 135                            | 20.41                                      |
| 10.     | Vythiri                            | 4,292                               | 144                            | 29.81                                      |
|         | <b>Kalpetta Block Total</b>        | <b>61,441</b>                       | <b>3,145</b>                   | <b>19.54</b>                               |
| 11.     | Edavaka                            | 16,924                              | 361                            | 46.88                                      |
| 12.     | Mananthavady                       | 3,500                               | 236                            | 14.83                                      |
| 13.     | Panamaram                          | 8,497                               | 151                            | 56.27                                      |
| 14.     | Thavinjal                          | 9,132                               | 151                            | 60.48                                      |
| 15.     | Thirunelly                         | 14,146                              | 360                            | 39.29                                      |
| 16.     | Thondernadu                        | 5,188                               | 151                            | 34.36                                      |
| 17.     | Vellamunda                         | 11,087                              | 619                            | 17.91                                      |
|         | <b>Mananthavady Block Total</b>    | <b>68,474</b>                       | <b>2,029</b>                   | <b>33.75</b>                               |
| 18.     | Ambalavayal                        | 2,764                               | 173                            | 15.98                                      |
| 19.     | Meenangadi                         | 4,236                               | 441                            | 9.61                                       |
| 20.     | Mullenkolly                        | 2,695                               | 415                            | 6.49                                       |
| 21.     | Nenmeni                            | 3,040                               | 310                            | 9.81                                       |
| 22.     | Noolpuzha                          | 26,834                              | 1,153                          | 23.27                                      |
| 23.     | Poothadi                           | 13,000                              | 385                            | 33.77                                      |
| 24.     | Pulpally                           | 13,020                              | 1,113                          | 11.69                                      |
| 25.     | Sulthan Bathery                    | 9,589                               | 248                            | 38.66                                      |
|         | <b>Sulthan Bathery Block Total</b> | <b>75,178</b>                       | <b>4,238</b>                   | <b>17.74</b>                               |
|         | <b>Total</b>                       | <b>2,05,093</b>                     | <b>9,412</b>                   | <b>21.79</b>                               |

Source: NREGS Progress reports of GPs and Blocks and field visits in Wayanad District.

Note: \* Figures worked out by dividing col. 3 by col. 4.

advantage of the NREGS also vary, depending on the level of development. There are communities like *Kattunaikkar* and *Koragar* who belong to primitive groups and could be considered as the 'most backward'. *Kurichiyar* and *Kurumar* could be considered as 'relatively developed'. *Paniyar* and *Adiyar* lie in between these groups. No focused effort was made to make those most backward benefit from the scheme, which was amply reflected in the percentage of job cards issued as well as employment received by *Kattunaikkar*, *Paniyar* and *Adiyar*. *Koragar* and *Karimpalan* tribes hardly benefited from the scheme. Due to the non-availability of data on the population of different tribes in each GP, we are not in a position to provide the extent of employment benefits received by each category.<sup>13</sup>

### Cases from the Field

The following cases from the field illustrate the type of problems that tribal communities often face in accessing the NREGS

#### Case 1

Kunjappan, a *Paniyar*, who lives in Ward 7 of Pozhuthana GP contacted the NREGS staff in the early stages of 2006-07. His request for registration of name was turned down by the NREGS staff saying that it can be taken up only in the following year. The net result was that when people from different parts of the GP were working in his ward area under the scheme, he remained jobless. On enquiry it was found that a number of members from *Paniyar* community could not register their names due to the non-cooperative attitude of NREGS staff. The case indicates the insensitivity and unfriendly attitude of the NREGS staff towards the tribal communities.

#### Case 2:

In this case a focused attempt was made to attract the *Paniyar* and other tribal community members in Vellamunda GP. The GP took a special effort by mobilising ST promoters and *Kudumbasree* volunteers towards sensitizing members of *Paniyar* colonies. It was found that members of *Paniyar* community face some problems while working with members of general communities. Since they are poor and do not have the habit of savings, they need to be paid at least on a weekly basis. Both these issues were tackled successfully at Vellamunda GP and therefore the Panchayat could do well with respect to registration, issue of job cards and provision of employment to the members of *Paniyar* community. This case shows that if focused efforts are made among the tribal communities, they can be made to access the benefits of NREGS better.

#### Case 3

In Ward 7 of Pozhuthana GP, ten families stay in a *Kattunaikkar* colony located in the forest area. Five persons from this colony were involved

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in the work under NREGS. Interactions with three of them showed that work was carried out by both general and tribal communities jointly. Workers from the general community used to relax and major portion of the work used to be carried out by the tribal workers. After some days, the tribal members demanded earmarking of work for them separately. According to them, earlier they had to work from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. to complete the assigned work. After the assignment of demarcated work for tribal workers, they are able to complete the target in 3 hours since they are accustomed to take up heavy work load and work very fast.<sup>14</sup>

#### Case 4

Chathan and his family belong to *Adiyar* tribe. They live in Ward 10 in Thirunelly GP. Chathan used to work in the estates of Coorg in Karnataka earlier. After registering his name under NREGS, he received 14 days of work during 2006-07. He was told that the work was over for the time being and he would be called later, which never happened. When he remained workless, he approached his previous employer in Coorg in vain. He approached him again through an agent, expressed his miseries and difficulties and managed to get back the old job. Now he fears that if he renews his involvement with the NREGS work, he will not be able to get back his job again. Unless a reasonable quantum of work is provided to them under NREGS, they are simply left to someone's mercy to address their livelihood issues.

#### Case 5

Kali belonging to *Adiyar* tribe is a widow and has three daughters. One of her daughters is separated from her husband and the other three are unmarried. She used to work in a coffee estate and receive Rs. 65 as daily wages. During 2006-07, she could not get work for many days in the estate area and was quite worried about the cost of her daughter's education. For admitting her daughter in a higher secondary school, she took a loan of Rs.2000 from the *Kudumbasree* unit. She mentioned that she could get the loan only on the special consideration that she is going for NREGS works. She reminded that her earlier requests for loan were turned down on account of doubts about repayment. This case shows the positive impact of involvement in NREGS works on the credit worthiness of a tribal woman.

#### Case 6

One work exclusively for the tribal communities was undertaken in Ward 19 of Vellamunda GP in Mananthavady Block. *Paniyar*, *Kurichiyar* and *Kattunaikkar* live in the Valaramkunnu colony of the same ward. Generally, members of *Kurichiyar* community practice a form of untouchability towards the *Paniyar* and *Kattunaikkar* community. During the past, no member from the tribal colony was involved in the works carried out under wage employment programmes as they were executed by the contractors who brought workers from far-off places, even when

the work used to be located in the tribal colonies. In the initial stages, members of the tribal communities felt that the same would happen in the case of NREGS works also. To attract tribal workers towards the NREGS, Valaramkunnu - Koyittapura road work was taken up in their colony at an estimated cost of Rs. 33,330. To motivate the community, a Panchayat Member from the next ward, who is from a *Paniyar* family, came forward with his wife. Of the total 51 persons who participated in the work 50 were from the tribal groups. Earlier, members from *Kurichiyar* community did not allow members of *Paniyar* community to even step in to the frontal portion of their houses to sign the muster roll. But when the work went on, lot of positive attitudinal changes started taking place including inter-dining.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Case 7*

Omana, who lives in Ward 8 of Pozhuthana GP, belongs to the *Kurumar* community. She has 5 acres of agricultural land with little returns from it. Both her children are affected with sickle-celled anaemia. Most of her earnings have been spent for the treatment of children and often had to borrow to meet their medical expenses. She used to go for work and get around 30 days of work in a year. With the introduction of NREGS, Omana and her husband received 100 days of work during 2006-07, out of which she alone worked for 86 days. Most of the long-pending loans taken for meeting the medical expenses could be repaid with the earnings from NREGS. The case shows the positive impact of NREGS in a tribal household, which was reeling under distress due to lack of employment opportunities and unavoidable medical expenses.

#### **Need for Publicity and Awareness**

Though several GPs have taken the initiative in registration of STs, the same interest was not sustained in the subsequent phases of the scheme. Many tribal persons are in receipt of job cards, but have no idea as to what to do next. There is a need for wider publicity in the tribal settings for improving their awareness about the scheme and the potential it offers for their sustenance. Awareness level of the *Kurichiyar* and *Kurumar* communities about NREGS is better compared to *Paniyar*, *Adiyar*, *Kattunaikkar*, *Koragar* and *Karimpalan* communities. Unless such micro level issues are addressed carefully, the scheme would not have the expected impact on under-developed and backward tribal communities in Wayanad district. And it is noticed that wherever the work supervisor is from a tribal community, there is a tendency to take due interest in providing employment opportunities to the community members.

### Delay in Wage Payments

Delay in wage payments for many days on completion of work retards the interest of the tribal community members due to various socio-economic factors.

### Employment Targeting Errors under NREGS

An overview of scheme governance in tribal settings points towards the wide possibility of major two kinds of employment targeting errors ('E' and 'F' errors) that can creep in during NREGS governance in the district. 'E' error indicates 'excessive coverage of adults from non-poor households participating in the scheme'; 'F' error denotes the 'failure to include the adults of poor households in the scheme. And 'S' error pertains to the 'Share of participants from non-poor households in the total number of participants involved in the scheme'.

Secondary data gathered from the GP offices and analysis of primary data collected from members of tribal communities show that possibilities of 'F' error in the district is high, whereas 'E' and 'S' errors are not significant.

### Socio-economic Changes

The scheme resulted in improving the educational prospects of children from tribal households. Instances of migration of labourers to other districts and nearby states have come down. Several *Kudumbasree* units started issuing loans to members of tribal communities. Shop keepers are also favourably disposed to NREGS works as they have positive spin offs for their businesses. Untouchability among different tribal communities like *Kurichiyar* and *Paniyar* has been waning, owing to the intimate interactions between the members at the work site.

### Suggestions

There is need for greater sensitization of tribal communities about the NREGS. As far as possible, sensitisation sessions should be handled by members of the same community. Whenever works are undertaken in the tribal colonies, the charge of work supervisor should be given to a *Kudumbasree* volunteer, preferably from a tribal community.

Integration of workers from tribal and general communities must be done in a gradual and cautious way since the tribal groups have a general suspicion of the general communities.

It is noted that delay in wage payments act as a major hindrance to the tribal community members. A temporary account operated by the GP may be created from which part of the wages to the tribal



workers may be paid on a daily basis. The final settlement of wages can be made after the measurement and other procedures. Constitution of a separate cell in the state employment guarantee council to review the status of tribal community in NREGA governance is also called for.

### **Conclusion**

A close study of socio-economic profile of the tribal beneficiaries and scheme governance in the district indicates that there is wide scope for NREGS in tribal settings. It is noted that the scheme resulted in creating employment opportunities for the tribal communities in the district during the reference period, though the average number of days of work provided to a tribal household is far below the scheme targets. There is also considerable difference in the extent to which individual tribal communities have been able to access the scheme. The absence of tribal sensitivity among the scheme managers also is a factor that needs immediate attention. Only through a political economy framework, we will be able to analyze all the reasons for the exclusion of certain tribal communities in the scheme and the unevenness of scheme implementation among the Panchayats.

The systems and processes put in place during the operationalisation of NREGS need to be made more friendly to tribal groups. Though the scheme has been more successful in reaching tribal groups than its predecessors, there is a need for greater focus on tribes. This includes greater tribal sensitivity and facilitation of wage payment schedules to fit in with the needs of tribal groups. The inclusion of excluded communities in the NREGA governance needs a different approach and strategy having regard to the political economy dimensions of the region.

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### **Notes and References**

1. Census 2001.
2. KIRTADS stands for Kerala Institute for Research, Training and Development of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. It is an autonomous institution, supported by the Department of SC/ST Welfare & Development, Government of Kerala.
3. Sickle-cell anaemia is a fatal genetic disease found mostly among

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the tribal communities like Cholanaikkar, Kattunaikkar, Koragar and Kadar in the state. In sickle cell anaemia, the red blood cells become distorted to a 'sickle' shape. Often the tip of these cells locks together and obstructs the flow of blood through capillaries. Sickle cells have a short span of life and are heavily destroyed in the spleen resulting in severe anaemia. It is caused by a recessive lethal gene mutation. It generally occurs in persons who are homozygous for that gene. The sicklers generally do not live beyond 20-25 years. Being active in the most productive period, it severely limits the tribal population and their productivity.

4. Jos Chathukulam and M.S.John "Issues in Tribal Development: The Recent Experience of Kerala" In Govinda Chandra Rath (ed.) *Tribal Development in India - The Contemporary Debate* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006), pp.182-202.
5. Oorukootams, the tribal neighbourhood forums, are convened in all wards of the GP which have a population of more than 50 tribal community members. In case of wards having a population of less than 50, such meetings could be convened at the Panchayat level.
6. It is a Kerala Government initiative for eradicating all the overt faces of poverty from the State within 10 years. Initiated by the Local Administration Ministry, Kudumbasree mission was launched in 1998. The self help groups of women were organised under the Kudumbasree project. The project aims at the all round development of the people below poverty line. It has a hierarchical structure of Neighbourhood Groups (NHG) at sub-ward level, Area Development Society (ADS) at the ward level and Community Development Society (CDS) at the GP level.
7. Government of Kerala, Tribal Sub-Plan, 1999-2000.
8. Chandra Prakash Singh, *Poverty Alleviation Programmes under the Plans* (New Delhi: Indus Publishing, 1989)pp.159-161.
9. This percentage could be less than the given figure, as the total number of rural households in the district is taken as per Census 2001 and there will be an increase in the magnitude of rural households during 2006-07.
10. Details regarding registration of ST households with the scheme were collected from the PRIs in Wayand District as on 31 March 2007.
11. Details regarding the issue of job cards to the ST households were collected from the PRIs in Wayand District as on 31 March 2007.
12. Details regarding the employment provided to the ST households were collected from the Gram Panchayats in Wayand District as on 31 March 2007.
13. Discussions with the staff of KIRTADS, Kozhikode, were made on 28 and 29 January 2008. They expressed their inability to provide the required data as no formal study was held by the Institute so far.

14. Discussions with the members of Kattunaikkar community of Ward 7 in Pozhuthana GP dated 18 July 2007.
15. Interactions with Raghavan, a member of Koragar community from Pozhuthana GP, on 18 July 2007.
16. This was noted during the visit to Pozhuthana market area on 29 June 2007.

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# Women's Education in India: An Appraisal

*Mohan Jharta*

## ***Introduction:***

EDUCATION PLAYS A vital role in the socio-economic development and transformation of society. It influences the structural elements of society and the living mode of its individuals. It has a bearing on the thought and behaviour patterns and the personality of the individuals. It makes a person conscious of his rights and responsibilities towards himself, his family, society and the state. The concept of 'education' is as old as the human race. Both formal and informal learning is construed as education. It is regarded as a process of empowerment through the imparting of knowledge, skills and values to individuals. Olutola has described education as "a process of socialization, of change and innovation, of preservation and dissemination of societal values and of the total development of an individual from birth to death".<sup>1</sup> Education opens the door of perception, intuition and discernment and is a testament to one's desire for knowledge and understanding, for human dignity, decency and moral progress.

Women constitute about half of the population of a country. The overall socio-economic conditions and the status of a nation can be said to depend on that of women. The various movements for improving the status of women all over the world have attached significance to education of women because it plays an important role in changing women's subjugated position. It is believed that education acts as a leveler of inequalities between the sexes. It breaks the chain of stereotype roles by changing social norms, thus enabling women to come out of their secluded position and participate in the

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wider world. Education contributes to raising the consciousness of women and their self-confidence and brings them out of the clutches of tradition. It enables them to think rationally and take independent decisions on various issues concerning them so that their actions are not governed by stereotype norms.

Education is also regarded as one of the means to enable women to assert their rights, overcome constraints and to achieve emancipation. Education is significant especially for girls and women because it is not only an entry point to other opportunities, but also has multiplier effects within the family and across generations. The educational achievements of women can increase their strength to resist oppression, to protest against gender based inequality, and to get a fairer deal in the society. The process of education and its attainment has an impact on all aspects of women's life. The Nairobi conference (1985) highlighted 'education' as the basis for the promotion and improvement of women's status and a tool to support their role as equal partners in society.<sup>2</sup>

The Fourth World Conference on women held in Beijing in 1995 also emphasized that education of women is an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in the decision-making process in society.<sup>3</sup> Investing in formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth. Thus, there can not be two opinions on the desirability of educating women for their overall empowerment as well as for the development of society as a whole.

### **Women's Education in Pre-Independence Era**

Women's education is affected by the socio-cultural milieu in which the people live. Despite the great significance of women's education, it has not received due attention. Women's education in India is constrained by age-old prejudices, various socio-cultural and economic factors and the socio-economic conditions of the people, their attitudes, norms, values and value-orientations. Historically, women in ancient India were held in high esteem. In Rig-Vedic period, women enjoyed a position of equality and were respected both in the family and society as well. They were imparted education like men and enjoyed considerable freedom in their lives. During this period, some women even composed Vedic hymns and participated in public academic discourses. The evidences show that during the Rig-Vedic period itself, at least 33 Mantras of the Rig-Veda were composed by women.<sup>4</sup> The Rig-Veda speaks of women's education as "Mother should impart

proper education to her children so as to broaden the horizon of their ideas"<sup>5</sup>.

In the later Vedic period, women's position deteriorated to some extent because of the undesirability of daughters and due to certain internal changes in society. In the later Vedic period, institutions of marriage and family and some Brahminical notions confined women to homes, and there was a gradual decline in female education. However, women of royal, rich and cultured families used to get their education like their male counterparts. In the post-Vedic period, women became a condemned section of the Hindu society. They were considered dependent on men throughout their lives. They were denied spiritual education and were confined to their homes and husbands. It was subsequent to the days of Manu that women suffered a set-back and their education declined. The Medieval period strengthened three atrocious practices - female infanticide, child marriage and sati - in the Hindu society. The marriageable age of girls generally was 9 to 10 years. This gave practically a death blow to any education worth the name to women. Women's education suffered a lot with the advent of Muslim rule. The purdah system was introduced, which confined most of the women to the four walls of their houses and deprived them of education.<sup>6</sup>

When the British came to India, there were no schools for girls. Indian prejudices against the education of women were strong and deep rooted. It was not considered respectable that a woman should read or write. Barring a few exceptions, the mass of women were not given education because it was linked to socio-religious institutions, reinforcing the patriarchal social order. During the British period, education became a tool of colonial power which permitted only a small section of society to have access to education. The British did not consider it necessary to educate women because women as clerks or officers were not required for administrative purposes. The 19th century social reformers raised their voice for women's emancipation. They saw education of women as an instrument to improve their efficiency to perform their traditional roles. Many social thinkers of the 19th century like M.G. Ranade, D.K. Karve, Rabindranath Tagore, K.C. Sen and others tried to inculcate in women the spirit and values of the society with the help of educational institutions. A number of educational institutions were opened to impart education to girls.<sup>7</sup>

The efforts towards female education were also made by the Christian missionaries. But the missionary schools could not attain much success, first because too much attention was paid to preaching Christianity and secondly, people till then were under the spell of social taboos, which restricted girls from going to schools. Although

female education received support from different quarters, yet its progress was rather slow. The Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Prathana Samaj supported female education and made significant contributions to its cause.

The founding of the Bethune School of Calcutta in 1847 by Drinkwater Bethune and Hindu Balika Vidyalaya in Calcutta by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar in 1849 were turning points in the history of female education in our country. In Bombay, Francina Sorabji, Ramabai Ranade and Pundita Ramabai dedicated themselves to the education and uplift of women. The Indian Education Commission (Hunter Commission) of 1882 remarked that female education was still in an extremely backward condition, and that it needed to be fostered in every legitimate way. Henceforth, government grants for girls' schools began to be given more liberally. This helped the growth in number of schools and girl students. Gradually, women began to receive school, college and university education. A ban on social evils like Sati and child marriage gave an impetus to women's education.<sup>8</sup>

With the dawn of 20th century, some progress was observed in the field of women's education which gave rise to the development of consciousness among the educated women. The leaders of the women's movements like Annie Besant, Ramabai Ranade, Lakshmi Menon, Margaret Cousins, Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, Durgabi Deshmukh, Violet Alva and so on saw education as not merely releasing the women from oppressive customs that reduced women's position within the family, but also as an instrument for achieving equality of opportunity, responsibility and autonomy to choose one's role, to participate in all aspects of social life, particularly in the struggle for freedom and national reconstruction.<sup>9</sup>

By 1930, almost all the provinces had passed laws for compulsory primary education and many of the rulers of the native States also took interest in this matter. Mahatma Gandhi also supported the cause of women's education. He opined that men and women held equal status in the society. Mahatma Gandhi formulated the scheme of basic education in 1937 which recommended compulsory education for all children in the mother tongue for seven years. This system of basic education was adopted in all the provinces where the congress party ruled under the Government of India Act, 1935.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in India, women had access to education during the Rig-Vedic period, which declined during Vedic, post Vedic and medieval periods and was revived again during the British period.



### **Women's Education in the Post-Independence Era**

Although the process of formal education of women made a beginning during the British period, yet the pace of educational development of women picked up momentum only after independence. With the advent of independence, education of girls as well as that of boys was recognized as a cardinal need, a *sine qua non* for national progress and development and a tool for bringing about social equality and transformation by our leaders, planners and policy makers. Education of women has been given top priority in order to remove women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to and retention in the educational institutions especially in the institutions of primary/elementary education. Women's education has become a major policy concern in India, both as a human right and as a development imperative.

The Constitution of India under Article 45 has laid down specific responsibilities of the State with regard to elementary education by enjoining upon the government to provide for free and compulsory education to children (both boys and girls) till they attain the age of 14 years. The Government of India has appointed various Committees and Commissions besides formulating education policies and programmes to facilitate and promote education among women. In our different Five Year Plans also, top priority has been given to women's education by the government so as to enhance their educational status.

It has been realized in free India that education of women is more important than that of men. The Radhakrishnan University Commission Report (1950) stated that "there cannot be educated people without education of women. If general education had to be limited to men or women, that opportunity should be given to women; for, then it would most surely be passed on to the next generation".<sup>11</sup> The Kothari Commission Report (1966) also pointed out that "the significance of the education of girls cannot be over-emphasized. For full development of our human resources, for the improvement of homes and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of men".<sup>12</sup>

A national committee on education for girls was set up in 1958 under the chairmanship of Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh who recommended concentrated attention on this important issue and allocation of resources for greater facilities to girls at primary and secondary levels. It also recommended the setting up of national and state-level councils for the promotion of female education. A resolution

to this effect in the National Policy on Education was placed in 1968. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986, viewed education as a premier instrument for promoting equality of status and opportunities between men and women. It regarded education as an agent of basic change in the status of women. It stated that the national education system would play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It also stated that women's studies would be promoted as a part of the various courses and educational institutions would be encouraged to take up active programs to further women's development.<sup>13</sup> The Women's Studies Centres/Cells set up in various universities and colleges with financial support from the University Grants Commission essentially function to promote the goals as stated in the National Policy on Education.

In May 1990, the Government of India (National Front Government), appointed a 17 member committee to review the implementation of the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 with Acharya Ramamurti as its Chairman. The committee submitted its report under the title "Towards an Enlightened and Humane society", which stated that in order to promote participation of the girls and women in education at all levels, there was a need for an integrated approach in designing and implementing the schemes that would address all the factors that inhibit their education. Mere implementation of disaggregated schemes such as opening of non-formal education centres for girls, adult education centres for women, etc. by themselves are not adequate.<sup>14</sup> In this context special mention may be made of interaction of early childhood care and education (ECCE) with primary education. Education of women is not to be construed merely as a question of having access but of empowering them to have equality of sexes without any discrimination.

The Programme of Action (POA), 1992 provides for a high level inter-ministerial committee for women's education in the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development to advise the government on policies and programmes related to girls' education and to accelerate planning mechanisms to ensure provision of essential support services that will enhance women's access and participation in education. The programme of Action of National Policy on Education, 1992 entitled its first chapter as 'Education for Women's equality'. It is a vital component of the overall strategy of securing equity and social justice in education. According to it, education can be an effective tool for women's empowerment.<sup>15</sup> The 86th Constitutional amendment Act, 2002 guarantees every child between the age of 6-14 years, education up to the elementary stage as a fundamental right. This amendment has put greater responsibility on

the centre and state governments to ensure that no citizen is left uneducated. Due consideration is being provided towards creating adequate infrastructure through social and economic investments and to ensure gender parity in elementary education.

The Government of India has initiated various schemes and programmes to promote and accelerate education among girls and women both at the central and state levels. A number of programmes are being implemented by the government such as Mahila Samakhya, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-day Meal Scheme, District Primary Education Programme, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary level, Kasturbha Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme, etc. Out of these, the two flagship programmes of the Government are the 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' and the 'Mid-Day Meal Scheme'.

Apart from these schemes and programmes, the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) has also introduced schemes like condensed course for education and vocational training, and distance education programme for women for extending and enlarging the scope of education among women and girl children. Further, under a centrally sponsored scheme, efforts have been made to arrest the school dropout rate and to improve enrollment and retention rates as far as possible with a focus on the girl students belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minorities and other socially disadvantaged groups who are usual victims through providing hostel facilities and other incentives like scholarships, educational aids and other related support.<sup>16</sup> Beside these, education is also made free for all girls up to the higher secondary stage in most of the states and Union Territories and many states have even made girls' education free up to the university level. There are many special scholarships for girls announced by the government and other agencies. Further, the efforts are being made by the government to encourage the participation of girls in vocational and technical programmes at different levels in order to promote their participation in non-traditional and modern occupations in the context of the present era of globalization and liberalization. The conscious efforts are also being made to improve the content and process of education from gender bias and sex-stereotyping, and making the curriculum at all levels of education more gender sensitive and gender friendly.

### **Present Scenario of Women's Education in India**

Due to the various policies and programmes, and the concerted efforts made by the government to enhance the education of women and change the outlook of people towards it, there has been a substantial progress in women's education in India especially after independence.

Gone are the days when women were no better than household cooks and nurses for the children. Today, Indian women want equality, education and recognition. They are realizing their rights in society and are aware that they are no less efficient than men. Their number is growing in schools, colleges and even in universities day by day. More girls are coming out with flying colours in public examinations than boys. The pass percentage of girls is higher than that of boys. There is no field where girls and women have not entered and won praise and appreciation.

Table 1 shows that over the six censuses conducted in India since independence, the literacy rate for females has increased from 8.86 percent in 1951 to 54.16 percent in 2001.<sup>17</sup> During the decade 1991-2001, the country witnessed a relatively faster growth in female literacy (14.87 percent) than male literacy (11.72 percent). The gender gap in literacy has also been reduced from 26.62 percent in 1981 to 24.84 percent in 1991 and to 21.69 percent in 2001. This shows that, in recent years, there is a tendency for reduction in the gender gap in the educational sphere, especially in literacy.

It may also be stated that even after six decades of independence still about half of the women population (45.84 percent) in India can not read or write, and they constitute the world's largest number of unlettered women in any country. A large gender gap in literacy still persists. The gap between male and female literacy was 18.30 percent in 1951, which has increased to 21.69 percent in 2001, whereas in an ideal situation, this gap should have been brought down considerably.

In the recent decades, female literacy has also shown an increase both in rural as well as urban areas. In rural areas it has increased from 4.87 percent in 1951 to 46.58 percent in 2001 and in the urban areas from 22.33 percent in 1951 to 72.99 percent in 2001. There still exists a wide rural-urban variation in female literacy. As per 2001 Census, there is a gap of 26.41 percent in rural-urban female literacy. Special attention needs to be paid to educate the rural women. In India, there is also wide regional variation in female literacy rates. States like Kerala (87.7 percent), Mizoram (86.7 percent) and Union Territories like Lakshadweep (80.5 percent) have better female literacy rates than states like Bihar (33.1 percent), Jharkhand (38.9 percent), Uttar Pradesh (42.2 percent) and Rajasthan (43.9 percent). This shows that the big Hindi-speaking states in India have comparatively low female literacy rates than the others.

Undoubtedly, the enrolment of girls at all stages of education has also improved appreciably over the years in the country. Girls' enrollment to total enrollment at elementary level (I-VIII) has increased from 17.7 percent in 1950-51 to 90.6 percent in 2004-05. There has also



been an impressive growth in the higher education of women. Women's enrolment to the total enrolment in higher education was only 10.03 percent in 1950-51 which has increased to 40.4 percent in 2004-05, and thus has registered almost a fourfold increase during this period.<sup>18</sup> A substantial increase in the enrolment of girls in educational institutions at all levels indicates improvement in girls' education which is very significant for their all-round development and empowerment.

However, despite the increase in enrollment, we find that female enrollment in educational institutions is low compared to that of males and the drop-out rate of girls is much higher than that of the boys at different levels of education. According to an estimate only about 32 percent of girls entering the primary stage reach the end of schooling. High drop-out rates among girls are embedded in various socio-cultural and economic factors.

Women also lag far behind men especially in higher education. A large difference between male and female enrolment is found in higher education. In 2002-03, women's enrollment per hundred men in higher education was only 67. Some of the main reasons that hamper the growth of women enrollment in higher education are the perception of women's role in a traditional mould, negative societal attitude towards their education, gender bias, poverty, lack of higher educational institutions in the area, lack of girls' hostels, etc. The girls who pursue their studies in colleges and universities are mainly from urban middle and upper classes with a few exceptions from the higher socio-economic strata of rural society.

Further, women are often channeled into the traditionally 'female' fields of study. Girls generally choose Arts courses rather than the technical and professional courses. A faculty-wise distribution of girls' enrollment in higher education in 2002-03 reveals that about 88 percent of the total enrollment of girls was in Arts (51.13 percent), Science (19.94 percent) and Commerce/Management (16.48 percent) faculties while the remaining 12 per cent was in the professional courses like Engineering/Technology (4.17 percent), Medicine (3.63 percent), Education (1.81 percent), Law (1.68 percent), Agriculture (0.25 per cent), Veterinary-Science (0.08 percent), etc. (UGC Annual Report, 2002-03). There are very few women's colleges which are offering courses in emerging areas like computer applications, electronics, biotechnology, and microbiology, etc. Even the vocational courses are mainly female-oriented and these do not equip women to enter professions which have high prestige and provide better salary, status and advancement in their career.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The above discussion reveals that despite the intensive efforts of the government to spread education among women after independence, progress in women's education appears to be very slow. The prevailing cultural prejudices and the perceived domestic and reproductive roles of women, the negative family and societal attitudes towards women's education, restrictions on mobility of girls especially after puberty, discrimination against the girl child, poverty, ignorance, early marriage, poor health and nutrition are some of the factors which tend to adversely affect the education of women. Women have to face many problems while getting education. Education for girls is not considered worthwhile. Many parents believe that it is not worthwhile to invest in girls' education; instead they prefer to invest time and money to educate their sons, who will provide support to them in their old age. The parents of middle and lower classes think it wise to save money for their daughters' dowry rather than for their education. Most of them consider it an unnecessary expense as the girl has to go to some other family after the marriage. The educational system has also become so expensive that poor parents can not afford it. They prefer to educate their sons than the daughters. Many parents are also reluctant even to allow their daughters to travel long distances to schools/colleges, be taught by male teachers and have close contact with boys. This view severely hampers girls' enrolment especially in the secondary and higher secondary stages of education. It is a major deterrent among the communities who still observe 'Purdah' and are shy of intermixing of girls with boys.

Involvement of girls in work at home and outside also hinders their access to education. In poor families, a large majority of young girls are expected to undertake domestic chores, including looking after the siblings when mothers are away at work, bringing fodder, fuel and water, and they also have to work in order to help in augmenting the family income. It should be noted that girls constitute a higher proportion of the unpaid family workers in India, and that is a major reason for their exclusion from the educational institutions at different levels. The other hindrances which come in the way of women's education are government apathy, lack of political will, lack of adequate infrastructural facilities like school buildings, toilets, separate schools for girls, women teachers and women hostels, non-availability of educational institutions especially in rural and remote areas, long distance of educational institutions from the home, lack of adequate transport facilities, purposeless and irrelevant curricula of study and so on.

To achieve women's equality and to empower them, it is very important to increase the access of women to education. There is an urgent need to design strategic policies and programmes for promoting education among women and to adopt a set of objectives specific to women's education. Some of the objectives to be achieved with regard to women's education are elimination of illiteracy, universalization of elementary and secondary education, minimization of the drop-out rates in case of girl students, reduction in gender gap, state-wise and urban-rural wise variations in female literacy, substantial vocationalization and diversification of secondary education to enhance economic opportunities for women, the provision of access to professional and job-oriented courses for women, and providing non-formal and part time courses to women to enable them to acquire knowledge and skills for their socio-economic and political empowerment.

The accessibility of educational facilities to girls can be achieved through reducing the distance of schools from their homes, opening separate schools for girls, appointment of trained lady teachers in the schools, expanding non-formal elementary education, adult education and the open school system, making the school timings flexible to suit local conditions and the needs of the working girls, and provision of crèches and child care facilities. Incentives like free text books, free supply of uniforms, scholarships and stipends and infrastructural facilities like proper school buildings, safe drinking water, toilets, more girls hostels, etc. need to be provided to encourage greater enrollment and retention of girls, especially girls from educationally deprived social groups. The system of distance education and self-study programmes can be useful for girls desirous of continuing education but unable to do so because of circumstances. A multiple-entry system and a system of part time education can also be useful for girls who can not attend school continuously on a full-time basis.

Poverty seems to be the major reason for the break in girls' education. The best strategy, therefore, is poverty alleviation. This can be achieved by offering short duration vocational and professional courses. Women's access to technical disciplines viz., engineering, medicine, law, etc. should be increased through providing these subjects in the colleges of smaller cities and towns without compromising on quality. Further, there is a need of gender positive environment in educational institutions. Teachers should be oriented towards the special needs of girl students and trained to incorporate measures for empowering them. Legal education and other skill and capacity building programmes for girl students should be organized



in the educational institutions and special funding for promoting such gender positive initiatives should be provided.

Beside the above steps, efforts should be made to remove the inherent prejudices working against the education of women. There is a need to change the attitudes of the people towards women education. We need to sensitize the people about the benefits of women education and try to change the prevailing social stereotypes which are adverse to the education and empowerment of women. The goal of universalizing the education of women can be achieved by a combination of policy alternatives and interventions at the family, community, society and state levels. Much is yet to be done to achieve gender parity in education in our country. The massive and joint efforts need to be made by the people, government and the NGOs in this regard. The strategies to be adopted for enhancing women education in India have also to take into account the vast geographical, socio-cultural and economic variations.

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# Jawaharlal Nehru and the Crisis of Nation-Building in India

*J. Prabhash*

## Introduction

DEMOCRATISATION OF POST-colonial societies – democratisation not only in the sense of formal equality and adult franchise, but in the sense of social change and liberatory transformation – poses many serious issues and dilemmas. The fragile unity of classes during the ant-colonial struggle and transfer of power to an overarching political movement (party?) after independence – Indian National Congress in the case of India or African National Congress in the case of South Africa – often convey a spurious impression that the new political dispensation would willingly address the daunting task of democratic nation-building in the manner described above. This perspective, therefore, assumes that the national state as opposed to the colonial state would have the interests of its citizens at its core and hence would arrogate to itself several roles simultaneously – of administering social justice, producing wealth, addressing social conflict and the like.<sup>1</sup>

However, this is too simplistic a reading of the socio-political reality of the post-colonial societies. On the one side, the idea about class unity during the freedom movement is itself deceptive as it was not based on any broad agreement regarding post-independence nation-building project or underlying social conflicts, and, therefore, was only transient – one that was concocted in the face of a long and severe struggle against a common enemy. It is true that the people overwhelmingly participated in the anti-colonial movements, but this was emotional and based on an imagined socially redeeming future.

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However, for the latter (social change) to happen, the ruling classes should take upon themselves the crucial task of destabilising the well entrenched economic structure, that too at the earliest available opportunity, when the propertied classes are weak and fragmented. Prabhat Patnaik neatly sums up this:

When the historical moment of weakness for the propertied classes has passed, when they have withered the storm and stabilized their position, they would not remain frozen in that position but would necessarily attempt to role back the tide. And as they do so, instead of political democracy, as a given unshakeable entity putting a limit to their transgressions, there would on the contrary be a threat to political democracy itself. Myriad ways would be found of abridging it, subverting it, and prevent its becoming an effective mode of popular intervention. Economics and politics would feed on each other in this dialectics: As the economic strength of the propertied classes increased, as a necessary consequence of accelerated growth under planning in a mixed economy, their political weight too would increase which in turn would enable them to use the state machinery to improve their relative economic strength still further.<sup>2</sup>

Acting swiftly and sternly is what is important here. This takes us to the other important dimension of the issue – the class character of the post-independence ruling elites. For, social change is something which cannot be brought into being through ballot box alone. Important as it is, it also depends, perhaps decisively, on the nature and commitment of the ruling classes. If history is any guide, in all the post-colonial societies, power flowed into the hands of a tiny group of propertied classes – a combination of landlord, petty bourgeoisie and big bureaucracy. This small group sucked the resources of the state and used its power to perpetuate its hegemony. Because of this narrow social base of the elites and the absence of any pressure from the masses, the leaders were under no compulsion to govern vigorously and disinterestedly.<sup>3</sup>

This is not to deny the possibility of the existence of a few enlightened leaders with a clear vision and commitment towards a certain degree of social transformation. But, exceptions apart, their presence and perspectives can have little impact on the course of events either as the political parties, of which they are the leaders, would be under the firm grip of the forces of status quo or their own class predilection itself won't allow them to go too far as to disturb the existing socio-economic structure. Consequently, the magnitude of initial social change would be minimal giving the propertied classes enough opportunity for re-grouping themselves and stalling further

moves towards any agenda for distributive justice. Looked at from the reverse side, it means that the march of a post-colonial society towards progress depends, *inter alia*, on all or a healthy combination of the following propositions: the progressive nature of the political party/movement which assumes power initially; the nature and magnitude of mobilisation of the poor and the marginalised so that constant pressure could be exerted on the state forcing it to go for progressive legislations; and capture of political power by progressive parties through ballot, subsequently. Nehruvian era in Indian politics has to be viewed against this background.

### **Nehruvian Development Strategy and Nature of Indian State**

The class nature of the ruling classes in the post-independence India and the Nehruvian development strategy fit well with the theoretical argument developed above. It may be recalled that the Congress Party to which power was transferred in 1947 was one with an elite leadership and a mass social base with local notables (read feudal elements at the village and district levels) acting as the connecting link between the two. There is nothing surprising in this, as this was the manner in which the party was built up during the freedom struggle. Needless to say, in every area and locality the natural interlocutors for the Congress leadership were the 'dominant men and the powerful social groups', and it 'utilised their power, their influence and their commitment to nationalism' to recruit new social classes and broaden the base of the struggle.<sup>4</sup> This was not a case of political recruitment from below, but of a gravitational pull from above. Thus the populist transformation of the party was achieved since 1920s largely without any change in the entrenched social structure or the economic inequalities in society.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, in contrast to the poverty-stricken Indian masses, the national political leaders were all members of the privileged upper class and their new positions of responsibility and power invested them with still greater privileges.<sup>6</sup>

It was this Congress which Nehru had inherited. Consequently his development strategies and economic policies had to face stiff resistance from the party. Nehru spoke about socialism, mixed-economy, industrialisation based on import substitution, centralised planning, land reforms, public investment, industrial licensing to regulate investible resources in the private sector etc. to a party whose members neither understood them nor were enthusiastic about such things. It was true that Nehru could force the party to adopt resolutions on socialism, planning and the like – the Nagpur, Lucknow, Ootacamund and Avadi sessions, for instance – but only to be rejected by his colleagues, both within the party and the government, either

at the policy level or defeated at the time of implementation. Judith Brown points out how in May 1963 well over hundred Congress MPs stalled the passage of a crucial constitution amendment, which would have safeguarded the legality of land ceiling legislation, by abstaining from the Parliament, thus allowing the bill to be lost for lack of necessary quorum; or how the Congress leadership of Nehru's own home state (UP) vocally opposed ceiling on land holdings.<sup>7</sup> This has resulted in the emergence of two ideologically polarised groups in the party which diverged from each other in every respect on the notion of nation-building – from economic policies to social outlook – but which, at the same time, did not want to settle the differences explicitly by carrying them to their logical conclusion through a process of inner party democracy. Both groups, therefore, did not attempt to educate the people and the party cadres ideologically on the merit of their respective positions and, instead, on the basis of an undefined truce, co-existed, with Nehru spelling out his socialist dream and the opponents trying to thwart its practical realisation, of course, with a great amount of success for the latter. To put it pithily, the Congress Party continued with a 'socialist head and a conservative body'.<sup>8</sup>

The desertion of the Socialists and other progressive sections from the Congress in the forties and fifties and their consequent fragmentation further isolated and disarmed the Nehruvian school within the party and contained the possibility of the emergence of a radical alternative to the Congress itself in due course. It is interesting to note that Sardar Patel himself played a crucial role in this process as he was instrumental in ejecting the socialists from the party. In a deft and strategic move he made the AICC to adopt an amendment to the party constitution prohibiting organised groups within it.<sup>9</sup> This was more than the socialists could chew and they, therefore, formed their own separate political out-fit which, however, was not able to make any serious dent in Indian politics either during the period of Nehru or subsequently. This realignment and decline resulted in a fundamental weakening of the reformists within the Congress, giving rise to a feeling among them, despite Nehru's apparent supremacy after 1951, of being encircled within their own party organisation.<sup>10</sup> This came to have two disastrous consequences for nation-building in India: Nehru came to lean heavily on the bureaucracy for support, and began vacillating at critical junctures.

Indian Bureaucracy, Nehru and his Cabinet formed a trinity of contradictions. Right from the beginning of his political career, Nehru had been highly critical of the comprador role of the Indian Civil Service in assisting the British to exploit the country economically and emasculating the national movement. Hence he and his associates

had been arguing for dismantling it. He said:

But one thing I am quite sure, that no new order can be built up in India so long as the spirit of the ICS pervades our administration and our public services . . . . Only with one type of state it will fit in, and that is the fascist type. Therefore it seems to me quite essential that the ICS and similar services must disappear completely, as such, before we can start real work on a new order. Individual members of these services, if they are willing and competent for the new job, will be welcome, but only on new conditions . . . . The new India must be served by earnest, efficient workers who have an ardent faith in the cause they serve and are bent on achievement, and who work for the joy and glory of it, and not for the attraction of high salaries.<sup>11</sup>

In fact this was a view that was shared by the leadership of the national movement as well. In such a situation, it is intriguing to note that the Indian state adopted the same bureaucracy without altering its basic character in any meaningful sense. Arguments like tackling the trauma of partition and the need for consolidating the polity were poor excuses and were at odds with the fundamental objective of the young republic viz., popular welfare. The un-restructured bureaucracy of a colonial state was eminently unsuited for such a task as its main traits were irresponsibility, unresponsiveness and inadequacy despite the rhetoric of serving the people,<sup>12</sup> and this only helped to foster a climate in favour of status quo.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Nehru himself acknowledged this towards the end of his life when he said that his greatest failure 'consisted in not transforming the administrative machinery' and that it was 'one of the main causes of India's inability to solve the problem of poverty'.<sup>14</sup>

Surprising still was the ideological complexion of his Cabinet. There was hardly anything more anachronistic for a leader who spoke the language of socialism and social emancipation than to have a team of ministers majority of whom shared a conservative and right-wing political philosophy. A look at the list of his finance ministers— Sir Shanmukham Chetty, Dr. John Mathai, C.D. Deshmukh, T.T. Krishnamachari and Morarji Desai — is illuminating. None of them shared his economic outlook, to say the least. The case of commerce ministry, another crucial portfolio for materialising his objectives, too was not different. Thus, by and large, few of his ministers might be considered Nehruites in any meaningful sense.<sup>15</sup> One is definitely at a loss to explain this Nehruvian logic of entrusting conservative men with the task of implementing progressive measures.

**Notion of Nation Building: Ambivalence to Indecisiveness**

Added to this was Nehru's benign notion of social change and nation-building and his vacillation at critical junctures. He had great faith in democracy, the role of persuasion and the value of votes in bringing about social change. In addition to this was his firm conviction that whatever might be the magnitude of change, it had to be brought about through a gradual process and, that too, with least disturbance to the status quo. Even his concept of socialism was defined in tune with this notion. As he put it:

Socialism was not about chasing out the whole tribe of landlords, capitalists and the like. Instead *socialism was about developing capitalism rather than combating it*.<sup>16</sup> Disparities should be lessened and *social justice promoted by pressures and a friendly approach even if it slowed down the pace of change*; and the whole pressures should be carried through in a democratic way[emphasis added].<sup>17</sup>

To conceptualise development and social change like this is to lay too much stress on the altruism of the propertied classes for which history has few testimonies. Consequent on this many crucial measures were either postponed or were taken in a half-hearted and halting manner by Nehru. This had strengthened the hands of conservative and reactionary forces giving a chance for resistance to build up against many reforms that might have been pushed through easily in the first flush of independence.<sup>18</sup> Land reform was a case in point. In the first instance, it was merely a half-baked measure which totally missed the target as it only attempted to abolish the zamindari system and not de-concentration of land ownership. In the second instance, in majority of cases, even this limited goal was frustrated by his own party the rural social base of which comprised of zamindars, talukdars, and various other rent seeking classes whose interests the agrarian legislation threatened. This failure of the Indian state to tackle the agrarian question in the early years of independence was the prime cause for the failure of centralised planning which has exercised the most profound influence upon subsequent social and political developments in the country.<sup>19</sup>

Nehru's vacillation at critical junctures – especially under mounting pressure from vested interests – further scaled down the momentum of social change he himself envisaged. It may be recalled that 1955- 56 was the period in which he took many crucial steps for nation-building. The resolution on the socialistic pattern of society adopted in the Avadi session of the Congress (1955); the Second Five Year Plan; the fourth constitutional amendment (1955) authorising the legislature to



fix the amount of compensation for property acquired for public purpose; introduction of state monopoly on trade (1955); nationalisation of insurance companies (1956); conversion of the Imperial Bank of India into SBI (1955); and the amendment to the Indian Companies Act (1956) imposing a ceiling on the number of companies an agency could manage (to ten), and fixing agency remuneration to 11 per cent of the company's profit, to name a few, belonged to this period.

The enormity of these measures upset the business /capitalist classes and the landed gentry, and with this Nehru began faltering. Even in the Avadi Session, towards its end, he tried to mollify these sections by clarifying that "... all land in India is a private sector ... . Probably all cottage industries will be in the private sector ... . If the state cannot do something or does not want to do something, why shouldn't private enterprise start it? ... As far as I can see two must be seen as a whole. The main thing is to increase wealth in this country."<sup>20</sup> This was followed by a series of speeches to soothe their ruffled feelings. Again criticisms against 'too much of socialism', in the Second Five Year Plan forced him to bring about certain changes in the final draft (Table: 1). The most noteworthy change was the sharp reduction in public outlay (at a time when total plan expenditure rose by Rs.500 cr.) for industry and mining (- Rs.210 cr.) and a corresponding increase for transport and communication (+ Rs.435 cr.) which, among other things, was expected to facilitate the growth of private investment in the country-side and would ease the flow of raw materials to the city and the reverse flow of urban manufactured goods to the rural areas.<sup>21</sup>

### **Beneficiaries of Development**

All these had exposed the greatest contradiction in Nehru's personality and development strategy as well – thinking and speaking radically but acting conservatively; aiming to bring about progressive changes, but without disturbing the socio-economic status quo. His own reaction to such criticisms makes interesting reading. For instance, in the course of one of his speeches he said, "well if you like, you may call me weak; I have no objection of being called weak. I do not like the dictatorial tendency in any person or government".<sup>22</sup> However the reality was that the compulsions of building up a post-colonial state based on consensus led Nehru to compromise to a much greater extent with vested interests than was necessary.<sup>23</sup>

Consequent on the above, contractors, rich farmers, managerial and bureaucratic personnel and organised working class became the primary beneficiaries of the Nehruvian model. The economy became

**Table-1**  
**Second Five Year Plan:**  
**Changes Made in the Plan Frame**

| Sectors                                                                   | Plan                            | Frame                         | Final                           | Draft                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                                                                           | Allotment<br>in Crore<br>rupees | Percentage<br>of the<br>total | Allotment<br>in Crore<br>rupees | Percentage<br>of the<br>total |
| Agriculture,<br>community<br>development<br>irrigation &<br>flood control | 950                             | 22.1                          | 1054                            | 21.9                          |
| Power                                                                     | 450                             | 10.5                          | 427                             | 8.9                           |
| Industry & mining                                                         | 1,100                           | 25.6                          | 890                             | 16.5                          |
| Transport &<br>communication                                              | 950                             | 22.1                          | 1,385                           | 28.9                          |
| Social services,<br>housing &<br>rehabilitation                           | 750                             | 17.4                          | 945                             | 19.7                          |
| Miscellaneous                                                             | 100                             | 2.3                           | 99                              | 2.1                           |
| Total                                                                     | 4,300                           | 100                           | 4,800                           | 100                           |

Source: Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (Delhi: OUP, 1998), p. 534.

locked in socially inefficient but privately profitable capitalist development<sup>24</sup> to such an extent that over the years the share of total approved investment allocated to the largest business houses – The Birlas, Tatas, J and K, and Shri Ram, for example – actually increased,<sup>25</sup> and even the representatives of the British capital in India had expressed their satisfaction at the new opportunities given to the private sector by the activity of the state in basic and heavy industries.<sup>26</sup>

The arguments raised so far definitely do not mean that Nehru's model of development was a thorough failure or that the masses did not, in any way, benefit out of it. Such an argument would be a gross injustice to one of the greatest statesmen of India. In fact he had done a yeoman service in consolidating India's political democracy and

strengthening secularism. Further in all major sectors of development – agriculture, industry, science and technology, education, power, transport and communication, public health and irrigation, to mention just a few – the country registered tremendous achievements. All these could be substantiated with the help of elaborate statistical data also. For instance, between 1950-65, agricultural output increased by 5.16 per cent; industrial output by 7.7 per cent; steel and cement four fold; mother and child welfare centers rose by 568 per cent; hospitals and dispensaries by 170 per cent; national income by 18 per cent; production of capital goods by 70 per cent; sixteen million acres of land were brought under plough; food production reached a new height, some 50 lakh tonnes above target; food consumption rose from 1800 to 2100 calories; use of clothes from a little over nine yards per head per year to 14.5 yards; and the country maintained an annual growth rate of 3 per cent during the first Five Year Plan (1951-56), 4 per cent during the next five years, and 17.6 per cent during the first four years of the third plan.<sup>27</sup> This was definitely impressive and had helped not only in creating a powerful middle class, but also the benefits of all these trickled down to the marginalised social groups in some measure.

### Conclusion

Thus the political economy of development in India under Nehru followed a contradictory logic – his intellectual and moral commitment to the well-being of the people reacted with his indecisiveness and a benign idea of nation-building which failed to appreciate the need for shaking the socio-economic order meaningfully; within the Congress the progressive sections (for instance, Socialists and other Leftists) deserted the party and the few who remained succumbed and faltered under pressure from the right wing-conservative elements; and outside, the bureaucratic elites worked in tandem with propertied interests and both made private gains out of public policies and institutions. Under these circumstances, the mass of the people who were envisaged to be the major beneficiaries became the major losers or at best fringe beneficiaries.

Absence of political competition because of the existence of One Party Dominant System in the country, during the Nehru years and well over a decade thereafter, also took its toll. This had foreclosed the possibility of mobilising people on the basis of an alternative development strategy outside the Congress and/or exerting pressure on the ruling party in favour of social change. Had it occurred it would have perhaps helped in strengthening the hands of the ideological leaders under Nehru within the Congress or would have forced his opponents to reduce the intensity of their opposition

towards the development strategy he had adopted, at least. As this was absent in the instant case, the status quoists within the party succeeded in holding power without electoral accountability and fear of the Nehruites within the party.

Nehruvian model of development was, thus, a product of its history, time and class. It was certainly not a historic failure, neither was it an illuminating success. It had to be placed somewhere in between. It had its grey areas and silver linings. Viewed thus the contemporary attempts by the neo-liberals to portray the model as a historic blunder and hold it – particularly the public sector – responsible for much of the economic problems India faces today seem misplaced and deliberate. These neo-liberal critiques are the natural heirs of the very same classes which earlier tried to wreck the model from within the Congress Party and outside of it. While their forefathers went about doing this task tacitly, they are very vocal today, thanks to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and East European nations. It is worth restating that what has failed is not the public sector that Nehru established but a travesty which had, taking advantage of the absent mindedness of the political public, usurped its name and symbols and prevented it from remaining really 'public' in any reasonable sense of the term.<sup>28</sup> As such what is needed is a restructuring and stock-taking of the Nehruvian development strategy so that its shortcomings could be mended. However, the class nature of the Indian state would not allow of such a course of action, neither does the new middle class, whose predecessors were the earliest beneficiaries of the model, want it. On the other end, the mass of the people continue to be inarticulate and de-mobilised as a political category. Even though caste/religion-based mobilisation is perceptible, it is incapable of addressing the political economy issues of development. This democratic deficit has been the greatest dilemma of Indian politics ever since independence.

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Michael Brecher, Nehru had made one last effort to establish some sort of an alliance with the Socialists outside the Congress. In the autumn of 1952 he wrote to Jaya Prakash Narayan, then leader of the newly formed PSP, and proposed 'co-operation at all levels'. J.P., as he is commonly called, on his part, was also favourably disposed towards the idea, and during the next six months half a dozen meetings were held between himself, Nehru, Acharya Narendra Dev and J.B. Kripalani. However the alliance could not be materialised as J.P. put forward a Fourteen Point Minimum Programme and Nehru expressed his inability to accept them 'all in one bunch'. For details see Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography* (Delhi: OUP, 1998), pp. 463-64.

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V. Raghupathy

## Indian Paradox

INDIA, AS A nation, state, government and society, is in a historic, difficult and paradoxical situation due to unprecedented changes and challenges that are occurring at present. It is interesting as well as agonising.<sup>1</sup> India is in the 8th place in having the wealthiest individuals in the world, in the 126th place in human development and in the 70th place in corruption. India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and is emerging as a preferred destination for foreign investors. It is one of the biggest beneficiaries of globalization of economy in the world. India can be proud of contributing 38% of doctors, 12% of high level scientists 36% of space scientists and 34% of computer experts to the USA. In the same way India contributes 40% of doctors to the UK. India is in the fourth position in terms of scientific manpower. And, 24000 students from India are migrating to the West for higher studies every year.

Of the total districts in India 170 have been declared disturbed and they are not under the effective control of the Indian Administrative System. India has got the largest number of women in the world affected by anaemia and the largest number of children in the world affected by malnutrition<sup>2</sup>. In India 68% of the people is depend on agriculture for survival, but the sector has contributed only 1.5% towards the economic growth of the country. Farmers' suicide rate is increasing in an otherwise prosperous state. Farmers'

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farming systems and sub-systems have been dismantled systematically in the process of industrialization of our economy and bureaucratization of our administration<sup>3</sup>. *Ad hoc* doles are being given to farmers not to commit suicide but not so much to revitalize the farming system. About 3.5 lakh manual scavengers in India are struggling to lead a decent human life, which categorically nullifies the 'India shining' slogan. Child labour is still a widely debated issue in India. Children are being hired for professional begging in the main cities of the country. About 150 million Indian households do not have electricity. Some 100 million families live without water. The country's literacy rate is unimpressive. Our infrastructure is poor in general and very poor in rural areas. Yet our bureaucracy is the largest in the world.

Despite the growing spiritual and religious sentiments, paradoxically, crime rates are increasing unabatedly in India. Water is being sold in the market at Rs. 12 per litre and milk is purchased from the farmers at Rs. 11 per litre. Natural resources like sand, blue metal and granite are being extracted enormously and the prices of the above materials are going up. Once sand for construction purposes was mined from everywhere and it was sold at a low price. Now it becomes a major source of income for business concerns and the government also. Natural resources are exploited in an unprecedented way. People are alienated from land and the natural resources are liberally freed from community control and they are being exploited by the market forces for profit making, which is being interpreted as a growth oriented activity. As a result, a sand mafia has emerged, and the sand mafia in partnership with politicians has degraded the environmental conditions. As a result people have started agitating against the indiscriminate mining of sand violating all the orders of the government. A day will come when the price of sand will surpass the price of cement as the price of water has surpassed the price of milk. In all development projects, work execution steps are very clearly spelt out, but similar clarity is absent when it comes to the question of resettlement of people displaced by the development initiatives of the government<sup>4</sup>. In the 2004 general elections, 311 candidates with criminal background contested, and of them, 70 got elected. Having realized their potential the criminals have directly entered into politics instead of acting as the henchmen of politicians. As a result, politics has become criminalized<sup>5</sup>.

In 2003-2004, Rs.85000 crores of tax was written off as the government was not able to collect it. Of the three percent of income tax payers, one percent are industrialists and business magnates and two percent are the salaried group. In the same way Rs. 236,000 crores of un-recovered loans of nationalised banks have also been written

off. Who are the beneficiaries of the above decision? The industrialists and business houses are the biggest beneficiaries of the decision.

The bureaucracy and the police have been helpful to the powerful as politics sets aside the principle of rule of law<sup>6</sup>. Indian polity has been shaped in such a way that the poor are always at the receiving end and they have a feeling of helplessness. People continue to submit petitions to the higher officials and politicians to get their dues and entitlements instead of claiming their entitlements. People often do not understand the process of democratic governance and administration. They know only elections as politicians approach them for votes. People are not oriented in democratic culture. In India the economy is in surplus but democracy is in deficit. This is the paradox.

### **Alternatives**

After realizing the Indian paradox many have come up with solutions to overcome all these problems through administrative and managerial means. Several committees and commissions had been constituted<sup>7</sup> and steps had been taken based on their recommendations. Yet problems are not decreasing. Instead they are increasing in geometrical proportion. Ministers, Members of the Parliament, Members of Legislative Assemblies and officials continue to receive petitions and the volume increases day by day<sup>8</sup>. The conditions warrant a thorough overhauling of the structures and procedures and a mass movement from below to dismantle many of the redundant systems and practices found in India's democracy and development. For all the ills and problems, exponents of democracy see answers in the form of enhancing people's participation in governance and development. Hence every one talks about good governance, participatory governance and participatory development.

### **Participatory Governance**

Good governance is a much debated topic in both academic and administrative forums in recent times, primarily from the perspective of donor agencies, which, incidentally, has provoked many to think of its varied dimensions<sup>9</sup>. As a result, volumes of literature have been published on good governance. But, in a civilized society, moral and ethical values have always formed the basis for good governance. When constitutional laws govern the society, moral and ethical laws should go hand in hand with them, but, in reality, they do not get primacy. One thing is obvious from the ongoing debate on good governance. Many Afro-Asian countries are experiencing severe strain in the process of development<sup>10</sup>.

When good governance is being discussed, it is natural for

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'corruption' to be linked with good governance. It has to be seen that the very discussion on good governance started with the basic objective of reducing corruption and making the government accountable to the people. Corruption is not the only factor which determines good governance. But corruption is the major factor affecting governance. A situation has arisen wherein one can not live without giving bribes. Even the President and the Prime Minister of India have expressed their deep concern about the growing menace of corruption in public life and in governance. If anyone wants to lead a moral life, he can do so without taking bribes, but the same person may not be able to lead his life without giving bribes. In the course of over sixty years of democratic governance in India we could not establish a democratic culture in our society. The human segments which spread corrupt culture in polity, administration and society work against the spreading of a democratic culture. In short, corruption has entered into every aspect of human life in India<sup>11</sup>.

We have a government which is democratic in character. But people do not know how to make use of the government for their betterment. It is because there is a gap between the citizens and the government<sup>12</sup>. As a result the bureaucracy gets empowered and acts on the direction of the political representatives. People have been oriented to leave citizens' responsibilities to the bureaucracy and take the status of beneficiaries. Our democracy does not percolate to the grassroots. As a result, governance becomes more of maneuvering and manipulation by the elites on behalf of the dominant groups to retain power. Democracy is judged by how elections are being conducted, how Parliament and Legislative Assemblies carry out their businesses. Democracy is a reflection of the involvement of the citizens in every public activity. Their perception, concern and participation are the needed ingredients to enhance the quality of democracy<sup>13</sup>. As John Stuart Mill stated, to understand representative democracy people should have maturity and knowledge. It all depends on how effectively people are integrated in the process of governance<sup>14</sup>. As long as the institutions deliver their services according to the needs and demands of the people, people will retain faith in the institutions. The accountability of the institutions should be to the people primarily and not to other forces. In our administrative system, there is hardly any space for accountability to the people<sup>15</sup>.

### **Issues of Mal-Governance**

It is true that when demands are unlimited and supply is limited, normally, one cannot expect people's adherence to ethical values, and individuals will try to get their share by any means. As a result, the

democratic delivery institutions have met with several failures. There is no assurance that every one will get what they want or their entitlement. Poverty, overpopulation and powerlessness are basic reasons for the emergence of corrupt practices. Governments have time frames to achieve targets.

In order to keep democracy alive, concentration of powers has to be avoided. That is why democratic decentralization of powers is widely advocated. A centralized democratic system cannot enforce discipline. Instead, it helps corruption. The best case is China<sup>16</sup>. Corruption is a phenomenon affecting the whole society, not just polity or administration.

The process of redeeming government from the deep malaise and promoting quality governance is called "good governance". A people-oriented initiative has to be taken to root out corruption. One question which remains unanswered is whether we can achieve good governance in a bad society. Governance does not take place in a vacuum. In a representative democracy, if governance is bad, it reflects not only the leaders' misdeeds and incapacity but also the general political culture of the people who elect the representatives to the authoritative bodies in the first place<sup>17</sup>. Scholars and administrators fix indicators of good governance, but not indicators of good society as if miracles will happen in governance automatically<sup>18</sup>.

### **Undervalued Citizens**

Governance is a process which involves several actors working in tandem to achieve the good of society. Electing good representatives constitutes one of the essential elements of this process. Good representatives will be elected only by politically conscious citizens fired with a desire for achieving the common good. Ultimately the responsibility for creating the conditions of good governance lies in the hands of the people. If the representatives feel that the people cannot be easily managed and the people are empowered and wise, they will not indulge in unethical conduct in public life. As long as the people fail to assert the rights and responsibilities arising from their role as citizens and continue to function as beneficiaries and petitioners looking for patronage from above, the goal of good governance will remain a distant dream.

Every fifth year, politicians have to go to the people to get their mandate. Once they get the mandate they remain powerful for five years. If at all they want to claim anything, it can be done only through filing a petition. The relationship between the ruling elites and the bureaucracy is strong. Our bureaucracy has been oriented to be accountable to their administrative and political masters and not to

the people. Further they are oriented towards realizing targets and not focused on the quality of the process. As a result, the bureaucracy, which has to work with the people, keeps the people away from development works. Thus development activities are undertaken on a supply driven mode which has ultimately created a gap between the people and the government.

For a healthy democracy citizens are the basic roots and hence people have to be oriented as citizens<sup>19</sup>. On many occasions, matters of governance are being discussed not by the citizens but only by the political parties. All political activities are centered round elections. Development issues are not the concern of politicians. They are the concern of scientists, administrators, professionals, technocrats and industrialists<sup>20</sup>. Despite all drawbacks in our polity, development does take place. India has paid a heavy price for democracy at the cost of development. Since electoral politics becomes costlier and governance structure more complicated, ordinary citizens who are willing to participate in politics and governance are baulked. Conflicts and quarrels among parties and politicians at present are not over issues of the people. They fight against each other to retain their space on the political plane.

### **Dominance of Political Parties**

The dominance of the political parties in the public space has strengthened the belief of the bureaucrats that politicians' directives are more powerful than rule of law. As long as the politicians and bureaucrats dominate the whole space of development, people withdraw from public space and governance. Instead of people managing and engaging institutions<sup>21</sup>, institutions and organizations start engaging the people, and literally they have been made subjects rather than citizens.

### **Ethics in Public Space**

In the absence of a value profile one can not expect a good society. Wherever community decisions are upheld, communities have a strong value framework evolved and adhered to over a period of time. But those values are only for community affairs<sup>22</sup>. For other issues which are being decided by the government institutions, individuals decide on their own by negating all the values of the community. Normally communities evolve a set of value profiles based on tradition, customary practices, the scriptures and cultural mores. The values may or may not have democratic elements. If there is no democratic element, they need to be infused. For good governance in India the needed value profiles were evolved by Mahatma Gandhi during the

freedom struggle. In the freedom struggle Mahatma Gandhi concentrated more on the good sense of individuals and communities than on the design of institutions. Having tested the power of the liberal institutions of the West, he did not opt for such institutions in India. He focused more on evolving institutions based on the community<sup>23</sup>. He evinced interest only in reconstructing society by changing individuals. Gandhi, in his *Hind Swaraj*, warned against the adoption of the values inherent in modern civilization. To establish self-governance and self-rule the communities have to control themselves. They should not be controlled externally. They will become informed citizens and enlightened citizens. Even the Prophet Muhammad said that unless people change themselves no force on earth can force them to do so. When people are oriented to govern themselves, the need for external governance will be the least. When governance is predominant, people's control over themselves will be the least.

### **A New Opportunity**

There is an opportunity for the people to take the initiative to establish corruption-free, responsive, responsible and representative governance at the grassroots through the new Panchayati Raj system. Now we can see that wherever people are proactive in the Panchayat, they elect good leaders and, in turn, the good leaders work with communities synergistically. A large number of grassroots leaders have demonstrated their potential in establishing good governance<sup>24</sup>. Large number of women and dalits have come to power and work on critical issues. Through the Gram Sabha people are being engaged meaningfully and women are brought to public space through self-help groups. There are many positive things happening around us. In Bangladesh, one of the corrupt states in the world, Mohammed Yunus found a value in "repayment ethics" which was banked upon by him to found a micro credit movement of women. Now it has become a world model for poverty reduction. From these micro credit activities women often derive the necessary confidence and skills to contest elections to local bodies. A large number of women have been elected to local bodies and are trying to develop a healthy culture which can positively impact on national politics in Bangladesh. The Gram Sabha can serve as a training ground for citizens to evolve decisions on the basis of a consensus<sup>25</sup>.

In many villages community leaders are responsible in managing the affairs of temples and natural resources<sup>26</sup>. They have evolved norms for conducting festivals, sharing water for irrigation purposes and providing some common services related to agriculture.

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Community Panchayats collect levies and maintain a corpus fund<sup>27</sup>. When people are engaged more meaningfully and continuously we will have democratic surplus. But we are now in democratic deficit.

Democratizing our society will solve many of our ills in governance. State government should withdraw from many areas and enable Panchayats to take over responsibilities. Big governance is burden on the shoulders of the people. By making the people take up many responsibilities at the grass root level, they will be empowered. The new Panchayati Raj system has come with enormous potential to transform the political space. But, this potential has not been recognised by the stakeholders. Machiavelli said people who are going to get benefits out of reform and innovation will behave as mute spectators and never raise their voice to get the benefits, and those who are going to be affected by any reform will work vigorously against it<sup>28</sup>. In the same way people who are going to gain the benefits out of the new Constitutional Amendments are not raising their voice and those who are losing powers are working vigorously to disturb the process of decentralization of powers. As a result, the empowered continue to keep power in their hands. If the Panchayati Raj system functions as per the letter and spirit of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India, many of the ills in our society can be solved through peaceful means.

What is needed at present is creating a model at the grassroots. A Village Panchayat can ensure all the basic services to the needy. It can achieve 100% literacy, reduce dropouts, free women from anaemia, free children from malnutrition and evolve micro plans for the all round development of the Panchayat areas. We need a micro and macro movement to set right corruption and mal-governance. It can be achieved only through the democratic way, by creating well informed and empowered citizens. That is why Rajiv Gandhi said: "We trust the people. We have faith in the people. It is the people who must determine their own destinies and the destiny of the nation. To the people of India, let us ensure maximum democracy and maximum devolution. Let the people be empowered."

### Conclusion

To establish just governance people have to be respected and allowed to take responsibility in managing their affairs on their own. People's participatory space has to be expanded and they should be allowed to participate in governance at the grassroots. Moral and ethical frameworks have to be evolved for governance along with a legal perspective. People's involvement in governance at all levels and participation in the process of development will empower the people.



A new democratic and participatory culture has to be created at the grassroots through the new Panchayati Raj system. This new culture will hopefully address the democratic deficit in the country.

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# Science, Spirituality and Swaraj: Towards a New Aesthetics of Ethical Existence

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## Introduction

GANDHI'S VISION OF life unmistakably shows a remarkable blend between the scientific (avidya) and the spiritual (vidya) aspects of knowledge — the interdependence and mutual inclusiveness of which is characterized by the centrality of truth and non-violence (satya and ahimsa) in Gandhi's theory and praxis for ethical existence. To Gandhi, science and spirituality have to be yoked together within an ethical framework of values to usher in the beautiful in human life. His holistic vision of life was, therefore, grounded in a new aesthetics of moral existence:

My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth. To see the universal and all-pervading spirit of truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of politics and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.<sup>1</sup>

Even if "politics" in the preceding statement is replaced with "science", the overall ethical import of Gandhi's vision will remain intact and unaffected. In other words, in the Gandhian worldview, both a scientist and a spiritually motivated seeker will pursue Truth—the former does so in order to maximise human comfort, happiness

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and abolish external pain and miseries, the latter in order to experience the spiritual oneness or unity of being through ahimsa, swaraj (self-rule) and satyagraha (soul or truth force). Science and spirituality both, if divorced from truth, morality, reason and ahimsa (non-violence), will not lead humanity towards lasting peace, progress and harmony or towards an ethical existence. Gandhi always wanted to test "the spiritual" (self-purification leading to self-knowledge) on the touchstone of "reason" and "morality". That is why he defined Hinduism as "search after truth through non-violent means".<sup>2</sup> And he was bold enough not to accept any authoritarian, dogmatic, spiritual book or a saint as the sole proprietor of truth. He said: "I decline to be bound by any interpretation, however learned it may be, if it is repugnant to reason or moral sense..."<sup>3</sup> Thus, Gandhi's approach to science and spirituality was quite liberal and open-ended.

It is significant to note here how Gandhi lays emphasis on both "reason" and the "moral sense" in order to characterize the essence of dharma or religion in the widest sense of spirituality. According to Gandhi, science devoid of "moral sense" will degenerate into valueless modernity or anarchy; whereas spirituality without reason will be mere humbug or sham- having no connection with the quotidian, ordinary human-existence marked by the weariness, the fever and the fret of life. Gandhi holds that a conscientious seeker of Truth (either a scientist or a spiritual practitioner) will strive for identification with the other through utter humility and self-purification – without which his/her pursuit of Truth will not contribute to the state of Sarvodaya (welfare of all) on this planet. This, in short, is what is implied by the new aesthetics of ethical existence – as exemplified by Gandhi through his deeds and words. But Gandhi rightly realized that the spiritual path leading one to identify with everything (tadatmya) is fraught with challenges and difficulties:

Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification: without self-purification the observance of law of Ahimsa must remain an empty dream: God can never be realized by one who is not pure of heart. Self-purification therefore must mean purification in all the walks of life. And purification being highly infectious, purification of oneself necessarily leads to the purification of one's surroundings. But the path of self-purification is hard and steep. To attain perfect purity one has to become absolutely passion free in thought, speech and action; to rise above the opposing currents of love and hatred, attachment and repulsion.<sup>4</sup>

Gandhi holds that the ethical and the scientific have to be mutually fulfilling and inclusive – only then the beauty of existence or a new

aesthetics of existence can be realized, by which hunger, poverty, violence, ignorance, inequality and injustice are addressed through science and spirituality- the twin coordinates of human existence.

Perspectivized thus, Gandhi imagines science and spirituality not as an oppositional dyad but as complementary constituents of the ethical base of human civilization. We have seen above that his notion of *adhyatma* or spirituality (or religion) is indeed quite practical and not mystical (or metaphysical or other-worldly in a general sense). Similarly, Gandhi considered science as a *means* to an end, that is, the realization of Truth or self-knowledge and the cessation of human suffering. The science of the material world is what is called *avidya* in the Indian (Hindu) tradition or *parampara*. On the other hand, the understanding of the spiritual is called *vidya*. According to *Ishavasyopanishad*, those who obsessively follow *vidya* or *avidya* enter blinding darkness (verse 8). Only he/she "who understands *vidya* and *avidya* both together, attains to the nature of immortals through *vidya*, having conquered death by *avidya*".

Gandhi also harmonized "reason" and "spirituality" and subjugated products or forms or applications as technology/ machines/ materialism to his spiritual/ethical imperative or vision in order to re-construct a new aesthetics for a world free from injustice, violence and exploitation. But he was sure that only a morally inspired science could produce the beautiful or *Sundaram*, the *Shivam* (the well-being for all) and *Satyam* (truth).

### Science and Swaraj: Spiritualizing (Con) - Science

Contrary to the popular illusory perception that Gandhi was against science and technology, he was one of the few modern spiritual practitioners who tried to humanize (or spiritualize) science and its various applications and forms (industry and technology) lest they should be abused to destroy all human and natural world. While admonishing the gross misuse of science by the power-structures to exploit and victimize people, Gandhi does not forget to pay tribute to the scientific spirit ( which is also the pursuit of truth):

I am not opposed to the progress of science as such. On the contrary, the scientific spirit of the West commands my admiration, and if that admiration is qualified, it is because the scientist of the West takes no note of God's lower creation.<sup>5</sup>

It is worthwhile to note that Gandhi admired the scientific point of view or spirit with which a scientist as a *sadhak* (practitioner)

remains engaged in the pursuit of truth. He was, however, quick to condemn the wrong direction the scientific spirit has taken:

I would like to pay my humble tribute to the spirit of research that fires modern scientist. My quarrel is not against that spirit. My complaint is against the direction that the spirit has taken. It has chiefly concerned itself with the exploration of laws and methods conducive to the merely material advancement of its clientele. But I have nothing but praise for the zeal, industry and sacrifice that have animated the modern scientists in the pursuit after truth. <sup>6</sup>

Thus, he was against the enslavement of the spirit of science in modern times to human greed or lust for material comforts or political power. In other words the true test of science lies, according to Gandhi, in its impact on moral conscience or character: "Who can deny that much that passes for science and art today ....instead of evoking the best in us, panders to our basest passions."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Gandhi wants science to evoke the best (and not the beast) in human character in order to make him/her an ideal member/ unit of a good, civil society. His stay in the west and his vast reading of western literature convinced him that what passes off as modern civilization in the west is but the result of the gross abuse of science, technology and that panders to creature comforts, violence, oppression, injustice and destruction of environment. His *Hind Swaraj* (1908) is a critique of western modernity or civilization that was grounded in the mis-use of science and technology. People living in western/modern civilization make bodily welfare the object of life and ignore the moral or spiritual progress or self-enlightenment. Gandhi called this civilization a satanic civilization and disease.<sup>8</sup>

The post-enlightenment modern civilization was defined in the west through its materialistic advancements and conquest of the natural and human world which were facilitated to a great extent by the Mephistophelian mediation of science and technology (for example the luxury industry, and the war industry) even without once reckoning its moral / environmental costs. Hence, its proximity and complicity with colonization, slavery, wars, violence, crimes, green house effect and destruction of flora and fauna. Gandhi on the other hand, defined civilization in spiritual/ethical terms:

Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe mortality is to attain mastery are out passions. So doing we know our slaves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilization means "good conduct".<sup>9</sup>

Thus, true civilization does not mean the proliferation or multiplication of material/consumer products and desires; it implies self-restraint, performance of our duty and observance of morality (that is, adherence to dharma) which lead one to true bliss or happiness that results from atma-bodh or spiritual enlightenment. Moreover, a person with good conduct will also be a good citizen of a civilized society. Therefore, Gandhi warned that "scientific truths and discoveries should cease to be mere instruments of greed"<sup>10</sup>, if the world is to survive and grow. The true progress of India or the world, according to him, lies in spiritual progress, which is in harmony with socially-ethically relevant progress of science and technology, and not in crass materialism if it becomes an end in itself.

We are dazzled by the material progress that western science has made. I am not enamoured of that progress. In fact, it almost seems as though God in his wisdom had prevented India from progressing along those lines, so that it might fulfill its special mission of resisting the onrush of materialism.<sup>11</sup>

Contrary to Gandhi's vision, contemporary India seems to be gravitating towards the glamour of the so-called economic globalization and heady consumerism driven by western science and technology and is moving away from the moral or spiritual path. Gandhi suggested the practice of non-violence and truth as a part of our character to successfully counter the destructive force of science and technology: "Non-violence is the only thing that the Atom Bomb cannot destroy I did not move a muscle when I first heard that the Atom Bomb had wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to myself, 'Unless the world adopts non-violence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind'".<sup>12</sup> And then he squarely blamed the managers of science for creating a terrible system of human destruction: "I regard the employment of the Atom Bomb for the wholesale destruction of men, women and children as the most diabolical use of science."<sup>13</sup> Needless to say, the same nuclear energy that decimated humanity in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in its destructive and negative avatar, may well be harnessed to produce unlimited electricity and other substances that may considerably reduce hunger, poverty and diseases from the world.

### **On Machinery: Exorcising the Devil**

In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi considers the unbridled growth of machinery a great sin because it is the chief symbol of modern civilization :- "Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilization : it represents a great sin".<sup>14</sup> Or "Machinery is like a snake-hole which may contain

from one to a hundred snakes. Where there is machinery, there are large cities, and where there are large cities, there are tram cars and railways, and there only does one see electric light... I cannot recall a single good point in connection with machinery".<sup>15</sup>

One can erroneously infer from the above-cited statements that Gandhi was unjustifiably a staunch critic of machinery. But he revised his views on machinery later on when he accepted the qualified and contextual usage of machinery after exorcizing it from the devil of greed hidden in it :- "I am not against machinery as such. The charkha itself for that matter is machinery. But I am a determined foe of all machinery that is designed for exploitation of people".<sup>16</sup> Gandhi questioned the contemporary craze for machinery in a country like India which is full of human recourses:

What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labour saving machinery. Men go on saving labour till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation.<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, Gandhi favoured heavy machinery when it is used for the welfare of the people :

The heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour, has its inevitable place, but all that would be owned by the state and used entirely for the benefit of the people. I can have no consideration for the machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the expense of the many, or without cause to displace the useful labour of the many.<sup>18</sup>

Gandhi could foresee the dangers inherent in the spiritually indifferent machine/plastic age - civilization much ahead of his times. He, therefore, wanted to exorcise the machine crazy civilization before it was too late: "Machine age aims at converting men into machines; I am aiming at reinstating man turned machine into his original state".<sup>19</sup>

Gandhi considered even human body as a delicate piece of machinery, which as machinery, is merely a means to an end-the spiritual enlightenment or self rule (Swaraj). He was, therefore, not a Luddite— a destroyer of all machines at all times; he wanted to use the machinery for the greatest good of all humanity (sarvodaya): "..... but machines will remain because, like the body, they are inevitable. The body itself, as I told you, is the purest piece of mechanism: but if it is a hindrance to the higher flights of soul, it has to be rejected."<sup>20</sup>

Gandhi could easily see through the unholy nexus between science, technology, machinery, industrialism, imperialism and the exploitation



of masses and nature in the name of development:

God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.<sup>21</sup>

His critique of American economic progress was valid as it was based on sound economic/cultural logic and it stands valid even today in the heydays of America-sponsored economic globalization, which is driven by its scientific technology:

America was the most industrialized country in the world, and yet it had not banished poverty and degradation. That was because it neglected the universal man-power and concentrated power in the hands of the few who amassed fortunes at the expense of the many. The result was that its industrialization had become a menace to its own poor and to the rest of the world.<sup>22</sup>

If one substitutes "industrialism" with "globalization" here one gets the most cogent and constructive criticism of its pernicious economic logic that brings about acute social dysfunctionality and disillusionment and it also serves as a statutory warning to a new globally and sensually developed India. Gandhi rightly says:

Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors. A vast country like India cannot expect to benefit by industrialization. In fact, India, when it begins to exploit other nations-as it must do if it becomes industrialized - will be a curse for other nations, a menace to the world.<sup>23</sup>

### **Critique of Modern Medicine/Medical Science**

It is on the touchstone of spirituality or morality that Gandhi tested his views on science/medical science, machinery, industry and modern civilization. For example, Gandhi asks medical practitioners as to why they opt for this "noble profession":

It is worth considering why take up the profession of medicine. It is certainly not taken up for the purpose of serving humanity. We become doctors so that we may obtain honours and riches. I have endeavoured to show that there is no real service of humanity in the profession and that it is injurious to mankind. Doctors make a show of their knowledge and charge exorbitant fee.<sup>24</sup>

No doubt, Gandhi errs here by making a sweeping generalization but how many doctors today would like to do a "reality/morality check" as suggested by Gandhi? Similarly, he opposed the misplaced medical ethic that ignores soul but valorizes the body:

My quarrel with the medical profession in general is that it ignores the soul altogether, and strains at nothing in seeking merely to repair such a fragile instrument as the body. Thus ignoring the soul, the profession puts men at its mercy and contributes to the diminution of human dignity and self-control.<sup>25</sup>

To him, due emphasis on spiritual purity implies physical purity also as he believed in the holistic notion of health. In this respect, medicine should cater to both bodily (external) and spiritual (inner) health :

The present science of medicine is divorced from religion. A clean spirit must build a clean body. I am convinced that the main rules or religious conduct conserve both the spirit and the body.<sup>26</sup>

And he goes on to compare the greed – driven or unethical medical science or system with black magic : "I regard the present system of medicine as black magic, because it tempts people to put an importance on the body and practically ignores the spirit within."<sup>27</sup>

No wonder, Gandhi at present may admire the recent film *Munna Bhai MBBS* which offers a critique of the soulless, inhumane medical science and its applications in medical profession today. Is it any wonder that the postmodern aesthetic that focuses on 'body and skin' is eventually grounded in the fast growing body and skin (read medical) treatment industry? It is through the abuse of science and technology that the beauty-contents and advertisements construct the beautiful only in terms of physical attractiveness (both male and female) ignoring the inner or spiritual aspect of the beautiful. Similarly, the burgeoning "Yoga-asana industry", which only valorizes the physical fitness and neglects the spiritual or ethical fitness in modern society, may have been criticized by Gandhi. According to him one has to keep a balance between a healthy mind and a healthy body:

*Men sana in corpore sano* is perhaps the first law of humanity. A healthy mind in a healthy body is a self-evident truth. There is an inevitable connection between mind and body. If we were in possession of healthy minds, we would shed all violence, and naturally obeying the laws of health, we would have healthy bodies without an effort.<sup>28</sup>

It is, however, interesting to note that Gandhi admired the

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western advancement in surgery: "The west has always commanded my admiration in surgical inventions and all round progress in that direction".<sup>29</sup> Surprisingly, Gandhi had his quota of problems with the present stagnant condition of Indian Ayurvedic system of medicine and he did not conceal his reservations about its limitations vis-a-vis the western medical science: "I know of not a single discovery or invention of any importance on the part of Ayurvedic physicians as against a brilliant array of discoveries and inventions which western physicians and surgeons boast."<sup>30</sup>

Gandhi may well be faulted here for speaking of ayurveda ahistorically and without proper study of the subject. There were social, cultural and historical reasons why the brilliance and utility of ayurveda dipped alarmingly after Sushruta, Charaka and Sharn-gadhara in Indian society.

He continues to attack Ayurvedic practitioners for stagnation and apathy in the same vein even further:

My quarrel with the professors of Ayurvedic system is that many them, if not indeed a vast majority of them are mere quacks pretending to know much more than they actually do, arrogating to themselves an infallibility and ability to cure all diseases..... They impute to Ayurveda an omnipotence which it does not possess and in doing so, they have made it a stagnant system instead of a gloriously progressive science.<sup>31</sup>

As a spiritual practitioner, Gandhi also practised/experimented with nature cure which "implies an ideal mode of life and that, in its turn, presupposes ideal living conditions are not in towns but in villages. The name of God is, of course, the hub round which the Nature cure system revolves".<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, according to him, the essence of nature cure is "that we learn the principle of hygiene and sanitation, and abide by those laws as well as the laws relating to proper nutrition. Thus does every one become his own doctor."<sup>33</sup>

One may be amused to learn that Gandhi condemned the modern medical science for the invention, popularization and presumption of contraceptives as a device for birth-control and consequent social engineering. He condemned the con-do(o)med, contraceptive-centric social engineering which aggravates the gross perversion of "kama"(basic sexual desire) and consequently affects the state of public morality in any human society:

Medical men will earn the gratitude of mankind, if instead of devising artificial means of birth control, they will find out the means of self control. The union is meant not for pleasure, but for bringing forth progeny. And union is a crime when the desire for progeny is absent.<sup>34</sup>

One may imagine Gandhi advocating the practice of self-control and morally-sanctioned "Kama or sexuality" in place of distributing "condoms" for safe sex and promiscuous indulgence in the ongoing fight against AIDS.

### **Conclusion: Quest for Truth as the Spiritual and the Scientific Imaginary**

Since Gandhi's notion of spirituality, in itself, was based on reason and practical morality in its widest sense, he frequently used it to reconstruct alternative meaning of science, technology, machinery, industry, medical science, colonialism, civilization, nation and politics which ensured the making or continuance of a civil or good society (say Gandhi's political swaraj). His notion of spirituality or religion was so all pervasive that it included even an atheist: "God is conscience. He is even the atheism of the atheist for, in his boundless love, God permits the atheist to live".<sup>35</sup> The sentence "God is conscience" says it all – it even accepts the atheism of a scientist in pursuit of truth, which, according to Gandhi, is yet another name of God. He aptly says, "One may banish the word "God", but one has no power to banish the thing itself. And, surely, conscience is but a poor and laborious paraphrase of the simple combination of three letters called 'God'".<sup>36</sup>

Gandhi added to the meanings of spirituality a surprising element of everydayness and ordinariness which is also visible in the uses of science:

We often prate about spirituality as if it had nothing to do with the ordinary affairs of life and had been reserved for anchorites in the Himalayan forests or concealed in some inaccessible Himalayan cave. Spirituality that has no bearing on and produces no effect on every day life is an airy nothing.<sup>37</sup>

Comparing the strength and potency of spirituality with that of science, Gandhi shows his faith in the power of spiritual life: "Spiritual life has greater potency than Marconi waves. Where there is no medium between me and my Lord and I simply become a willing vessel for His influences to flow into it, then I overflow as the waters of the Ganges at its source. There is no desire to speak when one lives the truth."<sup>38</sup>

Where both science and spirituality, according to Gandhi, meet is the pursuit of truth. But it is only "relative" truth that is attainable both to the spiritual or scientific seekers: "Nobody in this world possesses absolute Truth. This is God's attribute only. Relative truth is all we know. Therefore, we can only follow the truth as we see it.

Such pursuit of Truth cannot lead anyone astray.<sup>39</sup> All knowledge, spiritual or scientific, vidya or avidya, is present in Truth. According to Gandhi, our existence can only become ethical when the scientific (or the rational) and the spiritual co-exist for the greatest good of all humanity :

There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action. To the man who realized Truth in its fullness, nothing else remains to be known, because all knowledge is necessarily included in it. What is not included in it is not Truth, and so not true knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

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# Globalization and Indian Handicrafts: Quest for a Gandhian Way

*Pradeep Kumar Jena*

## **Introduction**

GLOBALIZATION, WHICH COVERS a wide range of distinct social, cultural, political and economic trends, has fast become a fashionable term in both academic and political debate these days. It is a process which refers to the growing socio-economic interdependence of countries world wide through rising size and variety of transactions of goods and services, capital flows, widespread diffusion of technology across borders besides the interaction and interdependence of people and culture throughout the world. So it refers to the growing integration of people, economies, societies and cultures around the world. Reduction of poverty and rapid economic growth in countries like India, China, and other countries that were poor few years ago, propose sufficient promises about globalization. At the same time increased inequality among people and economies as well as large-scale environmental degradation has also generated significant opposition and concerns both at national and international levels. Globalization simply refers to increasing connectivity, integration and interdependence in the socio-economic, technological, cultural, political and ecological spheres. The very concept has many sub-processes which include enhanced economic interdependence, increased cultural influence, rapid advancement of information and communication

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technology, and novel governance and geopolitical challenges that are increasingly binding people and culture of the world more tightly making a global village.

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines globalization as the "process by which the experience of everyday life is becoming standardized around the world."<sup>1</sup> To Friedman, "Globalization is the integration of markets, finance and technologies in a way that is shrinking the world from size medium to size small and enabling each of us to reach around the world farther and cheaper than ever before."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Martin Albrow defines globalization as all those processes by which the peoples of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society.<sup>3</sup> Arjun Appadurai considers it on the bases of five scapes under which current global flows occur. As he says, they occur in and through the growing disjunctures between *ethnoscape*, *technoscape*, *financescape*, *mediascape* and *ideoscape* i.e. people, machinery, money, images and ideas respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Another important thinker in this context, Anthony Giddens, calls globalization as the direct consequence of modernization. He defines it as "the intensification of world wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice-versa. This is a dialectical process because such local happenings may move in an obverse direction from the very distanciated relations that shape them. A local transformation is as much a part of globalization as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space."<sup>5</sup> Nowadays, globalization mean an end of geography and also death of distance. Geography and national borders have become obsolete concepts. Drastic development in the technologies of transport and communication has made everything available at everybody's doorstep. The World Wide Web and Internet have helped this process, enabling business to communicate more smoothly and efficiently and sparking what some have called the 'Third Wave' of economic growth.<sup>6</sup> Even in our local supermarket, different products of American and European origin catch the attention of our home consumers. So fast is the information flow as well. Much to our surprise, many foreign fashion shows are run these days with Hollywood models wearing the applique motifs sarees designed by Indian fashion designers. This instance adds to growing demand for Indian folk creations like applique umbrellas in western sea beaches. This shows how tradition meets with modernity these days. Globalisation has put both east and west into one compartment and makes a single village- a global village. As we know, globalization produces varieties of responses in the field of culture. Sometimes global culture gets inhabited in local



spheres making a micro global, and sometimes local culture mounts to the height of the global dome making a macro local and yet again sometimes both global and local culture produce a hybrid one- a glocal.<sup>7</sup> This is the magic of globalization these days.

But all these notwithstanding, this free flow has been unidirectional in nature. In the cultural sphere, the global spread of Levi's jeans, McDonalds, MTV and Coca Cola-Pepsi-Cola has shown increasing assimilation of local cultures into the American culture or what could have been said as Americanization, or McDonaldization or in Hannerz's interpretation of 'Cocacolonisation and Benjamin Barbers's terminology of 'Mc World'. Jagdish Bhagwati very rightly points out that, 'if the 19th century was British, a time of Pax-Britannica, and the 20th century was American, when Pax-Americana prevailed, the 21st century which many feared would be Japan's, a Pax-Japanica promises to be American again.'<sup>8</sup> Sheila. L. Croucher shows another sorry picture. As she says, almost 75% of the world's telephone lines-essential for new technologies like the Net- are in the west, yet it has just 17% of the world's population and of the Internet users, 88% live in the west.<sup>9</sup> According to statistics "the ratio between the incomes of the richest and the poorest country was 3:1 in 1820, it became 35:1 by 1950 and shot up to 72:1 in 1992. In the year 2000, the richest one percent of world's population received as much income as the poorest 57%."<sup>10</sup> This shows globalization's uneven consequences in favour of the privileged West.

### **The Globalizing Crafts**

India opened up its economy and adapted to globalisation in the early nineties. Major changes initiated as a part of the liberalisation and globalisation strategy included scrapping of the industrial license raj, reduction in the number of areas reserved for the public sector, amendment of the monopolies and the restrictive trade practices act, start of the privatisation programme, reduction in tariff rates etc. Many Indian companies have started becoming respectable players in the international scene. The liberalisation of the domestic economy and the increasing integration of India with the global economy have helped step up the GDP growth rates. In the year 1991-92, the GDP growth was just 1.3%, but in 1992-93 it touched the figure 5.3%. Year 1996-97 saw a high figure of 7.8%. In 2003-04, our GDP growth was 8.5%, in 2005-06, 9.0% and in 2006-07 it was 9.2% (Advance estimate).<sup>11</sup> Although there has been a comparatively low growth rate in between, for example the year 1997-98 (5%), a global comparison shows that ours is now the fastest growing economy after China.

Since the advent of globalization in 1991, our society has undergone many changes in different spheres. Though the forces of globalization have ample positive effects in the long-run in many sectors of our economy and society, some of its biased ramifications against the poor in many cases have worried different thinkers and planners in our country. If we put aside the latter for a moment, one of the growing sectors that benefited out of globalization is the handicraft industry with Indian handicrafts export crossing Rs 1,220 crores in 1990-91 from merely 10 crores in the mid fifties.<sup>12</sup> Again, it increased to Rs. 4517.52 crores in 1994-95 and Rs. 7206.79 crores in 2000-01. It had reached its peak of Rs. 8059.63 crores in 1999-2000.<sup>13</sup> Further the Indian Handicraft Export Council has estimated that the export of handicraft goods will touch Rs 32,700 crores by year 2010.<sup>14</sup> Table-1 below shows the entire figure of exports of different handicrafts products.

Many Indian handicrafts have aesthetic richness and decorative values which have become world famous. For example, the artisans who made *patta chitra* and applique work exclusively for the religious functions in the Lord Jagannath temple in Puri, Orissa, developed their skill to make these crafts internationally well-known.<sup>15</sup> Add to it, the Madhubani paintings of Bihar, Kalighat paintings of West Bengal and a number of striking metal crafts, stone carvings and wood carvings from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have become popular both in our native as well as international markets.<sup>16</sup> Handicrafts constitute a significant segment of the decentralized sector of our economy and its importance is being felt when it is assessed that it provides employment to lakhs of artisans found mainly among the weaker sections of our society such as SCs, STs and the women, producing goods worth thousands of crores rupees per year. The growth of this sector is evident from the fact that the employment in this sector has increased from 48.25 Lakh persons during 1991-92 to 81.5 lakhs in the year 1997-98.<sup>17</sup>

The skilled hand of the Indian craftsmen is our most important and yet most invisible resource. It is to be perceived with concern and with a precise understanding of its value. Because once lost, nothing can replace it. India has been the exporter of crafts for ages. To quote D. N. Saraf, "the workmanship of the Indian craftsmen is so exquisite that throughout the 18th and 19th centuries India was known to other countries on the trade route more by her crafts than by her art, religion and philosophy."<sup>18</sup>

As the data shown above clarifies, remarkable progress has been made in exports of handicrafts since India's independence. The Handicrafts and Handlooms Exports Corporation of India

**Table-1**  
**Handicrafts Items Exported from India**  
**(1998-1999 to 2006-2007)**

(Rs. in Crores)

| Items                                | 1998-99        | 1999-2000      | 2000-01        | 2001-02        | 2002-03        | 2003-04        | 2004-05        | 2005-06        | 2006-07<br>(upto<br>Jan. 07) |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| Carpet &<br>other Floor<br>Coverings |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                              |
| Woolen                               | 1783.32        | 1888.45        | 2045.96        | 2152.69        | 2293.79        | 2015.11        | 1974.00        | 2512.11        | 2571.05                      |
| Silk                                 | 136.46         | 153.93         | 167.03         | 198.27         | 209.42         | 198.69         | 187.25         | 181.70         | 215.23                       |
| Synthetic                            | 94.16          | 93.65          | 102.16         | 85.17          | 87.05          | 86.24          | 61.95          | 56.05          | 62.15                        |
| <b>Total Other</b>                   | <b>2013.94</b> | <b>2136.03</b> | <b>2316.15</b> | <b>2436.13</b> | <b>2590.26</b> | <b>2300.04</b> | <b>2223.20</b> | <b>2749.85</b> | <b>2848.43</b>               |
| <b>Other<br/>Handicrafts</b>         |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                |                              |
| Art Metal<br>ware                    | 1329.16        | 1497.18        | 1778.10        | 1758.90        | 2165.21        | 2642.42        | 3364.93        | 3662.98        | 3391.04                      |
| Wood ware                            | 286.04         | 394.95         | 434.44         | 431.88         | 511.35         | 609.07         | 721.18         | 853.06         | 803.72                       |

Contd.

| Items                             | 1998-99 | 1999-2000 | 2000-01 | 2001-02  | 2002-03  | 2003-04  | 2004-05  | 2005-06  | 2006-07<br>(upto<br>Jan. 07) |
|-----------------------------------|---------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|------------------------------|
| H.P. Textiles<br>Scarves          | 1033.98 | 1158.05   | 1276.75 | 1221.59  | 1466.52  | 1611.43  | 1848.76  | 2053.70  | 2182.97                      |
| Embroidered<br>& Crochet<br>Goods | 1209.42 | 1584.36   | 1964.78 | 1931.97  | 2477.75  | 3286.05  | 419.85   | 4711.45  | 4117.84                      |
| Shawls as<br>Art wares            | 48.48   | 21.50     | 27.20   | 27.01    | 32.70    | 43.27    | 53.65    | 110.23   | 152.62                       |
| Zari & Zari<br>Goods              | 74.95   | 6.52      | 142.32  | 134.04   | 159.47   | 210.54   | 252.28   | 347.05   | 237.18                       |
| Imitation<br>Jewellery            | 104.10  | 113.65    | 121.68  | 117.53   | 138.79   | 161.90   | 200.56   | 274.86   | 259.45                       |
| Misc.<br>Handicrafts              | 1057.57 | 1116.40   | 1210.08 | 1146.58  | 1391.62  | 1900.46  | 2391.48  | 2513.52  | 2124.13                      |
| Total                             | 5143.70 | 5969.60   | 6955.35 | 6769.50a | 8343.41  | 10465.14 | 13032.70 | 14526.85 | 13268.95                     |
| Grand Total                       | 7157.64 | 8105.63   | 9270.50 | 9205.63  | 10933.67 | 12765.18 | 15255.90 | 17276.71 | 16117.38                     |

Source: Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, Sited in  
<http://www.indiastat.com/india/ShowDataSec.asp?secid=206704&ptid=18081>

(HHEC), a Government of India undertaking established in 1962 has been involved in promoting Indian handloom fabrics in the west. There is vast scope for India's handicrafts exports to grow further. In the age of globalization, where efficiency meets success, Indian handicraft's further prospect lies in diversification of products and markets. We have to be at the forefront of our competitors in keeping ourselves informed of market trends and changes in fashion and design.

### **The Real Problem**

As said above, there are ample opportunities for the handicrafts sector in the global market. However, despite the prospects, there lies great threat to these indigenous creations too. Due to the popularization of machine-based low cost and superior quality consumer goods, the Indian handicraft industry is facing enormous problems. If we analyse the historical past of the Indian arts and crafts, then during the medieval times, the kings and the rulers of the land had given patronage to the crafts and the artists. Even *jajmani* system worked well for the artists. But after that, the British period in India proved to be a complicated time for this sector. The Indian handlooms also had a similar fate during this period. The British authorities intentionally promoted the machine made foreign products in Indian markets. India had to supply the raw materials like raw cotton and the British factories had to provide the fine clothes. "So the traditional handicrafts of India which were then world famous were systematically destroyed to create a market for British products."<sup>19</sup> Then, after independence, the Government of India as a matter of policy wanted to revamp the craft tradition of our country and promote small scale and cottage industries. It is an altogether different issue how much the craft sector got benefited out of the government sponsored schemes. But it is in the present liberalized market system that the craft industry faces greater vulnerabilities. With the evolution of the modern market economy, the artisans have lost their holds over the old patron-client business network and *jajmani* relationship. In the era of globalization, though products are going global and there is increasing demand for them, leading to a rise in the handicraft sector economy, the artisans have become increasingly dependent on middle men and trader entrepreneurs who pay the artisans wages on piece rate basis. The government's initiative to create cooperatives has not become much successful. Craft workers who have little formal education and are rarely organised are subject to many exploitative work conditions. Again the opportunistic middle men exploit these precarious labour conditions to their financial benefit.<sup>20</sup> A report

suggests that, there are over 25 lakh craftspersons in India, based mostly in the villages who are not used to interaction with buyers and don't have the necessary skills to safeguard their own interests.<sup>21</sup> Illiteracy often makes them more vulnerable. As a result, most of the artists are now a days choosing to shift to other professions rather than to stick to their hereditary occupation. A study suggests that the weavers of *Pattamadai mats* of Tamil Nadu in general and women artists in particular are increasingly shifting to professions like *beedi* rolling, which is faster and easier and which earns higher returns.<sup>22</sup> A report of the census conducted by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in 1995-96 suggests that, the handloom sector boasts of 3.4 million weavers, whereas in 1987-88, it was 4.3 million.<sup>23</sup> A UN report suggests that over the past 30 years in India the number of artisans have declined by at least 30% with many joining the ranks of casual labourers and the informal economy.<sup>24</sup> Another report says that the 'Keithel', the traditional market run and managed by women in Imphal, Manipur, is coming under attack. It is here, the Manipuri women sell their different coloured hand woven clothes. The report suggests that all over the Northeast, forces of globalization and privatization, backed by hegemony of the state machinery are ousting the indigenous women's markets and production centers.<sup>25</sup>

Another problem is that the village craftsmen in our society remain concerned that with free trade, mass production, embroidery from other parts of the world will out price their own crafts. As Kaushik Basu, emphasizes, "though globalization has so far served the handicrafts sector well, there is no denial that some of these products will come under attack and India will not be able to ward that off."<sup>26</sup> Many quotidian crafts are replaced by cheap machine made finished items these days. Plastic sandals are replaced by the leather made *chappals*, clay pottery items are being replaced by plastic plates, jugs etc. Nowadays, in Orissa, various small scale industries have been facing enormous problems and have failed to compete with the Chinese companies who have intruded into the local market with their low cost products.<sup>27</sup> The precarious condition of the artisans and the crafts is again highlighted when globalization has separated the crafts from the actual artisans. For example various factories in China now mass produce and market 'sari' cloth, based on Indian designs, therefore making a 'virtual artisan' where the craft itself survives in a hybrid form that may or may not be produced by the original workers.<sup>28</sup> So there is an urgent need for the Indian government to invest more in this sector.

Yet another potential threat to the handicrafts is related to

innovation. In market economy, emphasis is given to the consumption pattern of the people. If the customer wants a product, it must be available, even if the social costs are high.<sup>29</sup> So the artists are bringing in changes in different artifacts to meet with the demands of the people. In many respects the contemporary artisans retain traditionalism in their craft while simultaneously producing for a global consumer or local tourist market.<sup>30</sup> But the problem arises when originality is threatened in the very process of innovation. In Orissa, for example, in the appliqué sector, it has been observed that competition amongst the artisans, use of low quality inputs and use of readymade and machine made items have often brought down the standard of the work. Something exceptional in the market that may be liked by the tourists initiated change in the appliqué works.<sup>31</sup> According to Sheikh Aasique of *Nilam Appliques* (name of the shop) in Pipili town of Orissa, "we have to bring changes since the consumers want variety"<sup>32</sup>. Such increased diversity in the number of items produced is seen not only in appliqué works of Pipili but also in patta-paintings, tassar-painting, silver filigree, brass work and stone carving.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Gandhian Way**

As India opens up her doors to the multinationals in the era of economic reform and liberalized market, putting an end to the license raj, it is not only economies that often meet in the global market sphere, but also people and cultures, which bring a new dimension to the multi-cultural setting. The magic of globalization is that in modern times, there is always a cross-cultural interaction of both the 'local' and 'global' and notwithstanding many contradictions, global village is now not just a possibility, but a reality. Talking about Indian handicraft industry, which constitutes a significant segment of the decentralized sector of our economy, its export has reached a commendable position. Indian folk art and crafts which are integral parts of Indian culture and tradition are in high demand among the western consumers. Again, foreign fashion industry borrows a great deal from Indian appliquéd motifs Saree designs. Needless to say, the borders between the world cultures are now eroding and becoming irrelevant.

But all these notwithstanding, the real concern for many of us is whether the 'local' can really meet with the 'global' by truly sustaining its localness? So the basic question arises, does globalization provide answers for every human problem that the world is facing now? The answer is a clear 'No'. Apparently the world is now taking a second look at the Gandhian way of economic development and social progress. Although we in India have well-acknowledged the

contribution of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, to India's independence, we have given a little attention to his economic thought. Even Gandhi himself was against his ideas being taken as constituting an ideal model. As he had said, "If I were to know, after my death, that what I stood for had degenerated into sectarianism, I should be deeply pained. ....You are no followers, but fellow students, fellow pilgrims, fellow seekers and fellow workers."<sup>34</sup> But all these notwithstanding, Gandhi's view on the indigenous crafts and cottage industries of our country, which has profound contribution to our economy, is outstanding and possesses ample relevance even in the present context. As discussed in the previous section, the ancient Indian villages were self-sufficient and prosperous and the village handicrafts of the country were of international repute. But the colonial period of Indian History proved too costly for the Indian craft industry. This had shocked Gandhi deeply. He said, "When I read Dutt's *Economic History of India*, I wept and as I think of it again my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared."<sup>35</sup> Therefore he wanted to restore the traditional resource of India by reviving the traditional crafts. He emphasized the need for strengthening the village economy where most of the Indians earn their means of living. Gandhi said, "Crafts were to be revived, everyone was to spin, and everyone therefore, was to buy raw cotton- or grow his own- and a spinning wheel with which to spin it."<sup>36</sup> Gandhi was neither against economic progress, nor against capital creation. He was not against market even. As he said, "The village was to be self-sufficient as regards basic needs, but additional products could be traded."<sup>37</sup> He always asked for village self-sufficiency. He was in favor of small-scale and cottage industries and disliked the large scale machine- based factories especially in Indian conditions with plentiful of labour and scarce capital. So Gandhi advocated production by the masses rather than mass production.<sup>38</sup> Gandhi was not against machines as such. He remarked, "I am aiming not at eradication of all machinery, but limitation. ....Just where machinery ceases to help the individual and encroaches upon his individuality, its use should go."<sup>39</sup> Similarly, he was not against industrialization either but he was opposed to unnecessary competition and exploitation. To quote him, "....the majority of all machines should be small, inexpensive and adaptable to family or individual use and obtainable by all. The larger, more expensive ones should be State-operated and State-controlled only and used for the welfare of the society."<sup>40</sup>



Industrialization as a process has been successful in western countries because they are rich in capital but short of labour unlike India which is the opposite case. So it is clear that Gandhi wanted to make proper use of the huge labour force that India had possessed and solve the country's unemployment crisis. As M. P. Mathai writes, "according to Gandhi the best way to provide work to the masses in the Indian situation was the revival of *Khadi* (hand spinning and hand weaving) and other cottage and village industries which would cater to the basic needs of the masses."<sup>41</sup> So Gandhi wanted industrialization not to demolish the traditional handicrafts and cottage industries. To quote him, "The large scale industries must not deprive people of employment, they must not exploit the villages or compete with village crafts, they must help the village artisans to reduce his drudgery and improve his efficiency."<sup>42</sup> He imagined India "as a society where there is equal distribution and consumption of wealth, where there exists neither rich nor poor, no conflict between capital and labour, and a self sufficient economy, devoid of any competition, exploitation and violence." This is what Gandhi called *India of my Dreams*.<sup>43</sup>

#### Intervention: Need of the Hour

The preceding sections narrated the issues of globalization and the problems that the crafts and craftspersons face. Gandhi borrowed ideas of world figures like Jesus, Thoreau, Ruskin and Tolstoy, got himself educated in Britain, started his political life in South Africa and finally became the hero of Indian freedom movement, all of which qualify him as a truly a global person and a product of globalization. He said, "I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any." Gandhi opined that "globalization was not evil but to believe that everything western was superior was not the correct stand to take."<sup>44</sup> Although Gandhi did not see any threat to Indian culture due to globalization, "he identified that the establishment of a global society would carry certain dangers for the sovereign nations such as colonialism, both cultural and political, industrialization and commercialization of the economy leading to class antagonism and environmental hazards."<sup>45</sup> Looking at the dangers posed due to the effects of global climate change and many other environmental hazards along with the evils of industrialization, profit motivated commercialization, Gandhi's views on globalization seems as relevant today as it was during his times. "What we now call 'globalization' amounts to 'freedom to exploit the resources and peoples of many part of the globe', whereas what Gandhi had in

mind was 'a one-ness with all human beings, in fact all creatures, in any part of the globe.'<sup>46</sup> The present day globalization no doubt is a drive for profit making. 'When Coca-Cola or Kentucky's chicken want the freedom to open branches in China or Russia, their primary motivation is not love for the Russian or Chinese people, but the profits they will derive from such a venture.'<sup>47</sup> In globalization days and for we in India, what is important is not the availability of McDonald's and Kentucky's brands in New Delhi or Mumbai, but rather the availability of and accessibility to South Indian *Dosha*, North Indian *Rajma*, and Orissan *Dalma* in the streets of New York, Stockholm and Toronto. "Gandhi's globalization amounted to 'think globally and act locally', whereas modern globalization amounts to 'act globally, think locally.'<sup>48</sup>

Coming back to the issue of handicrafts and cottage industries, the Indian government after independence followed many of Gandhi's ideas in the form of promoting handmade products, supporting with financial assistance and so on. Based on the statistics of the handicrafts exports, it could be concluded that the local handicraft products of our country have enough opportunities in the home and global markets. But the precarious condition of the artisans needs careful interventions. It can be said that the government have been taking different measures to make the handicraft products globally competitive and the condition of the artisans better. The All India Handicrafts Board was established in 1952 to study the problems confronting the handicrafts, to improve and develop production techniques and evolve new designs to suit the changing tastes and to promote marketing in India and abroad.<sup>49</sup> The Development Commissioner of handicrafts has taken various safety measures for the welfare of the artisans like giving training and introducing new techniques and designs to meet the demands of the variety-seeking consumers. Besides, organizing exhibition-cum-sale of crafts products, opening up of sales emporium for the handicrafts goods and providing insurances to the poor craftspersons are also taken up. After 1990s, when the adoption of liberalization policies theoretically demanded a complete withdrawal of state from different sectors and to give market a free-hand, the Indian government, to some extent, continued its support to this sector; in many cases this effort is lackadaisical though. So the policies need to be implemented wholeheartedly by the government agencies because these have not shown productive results.

One of the important reasons why many government schemes have not been so fruitful is the lack of proper knowledge about the target group. In 1993, the Development Commissioner of handicrafts planned to conduct an all India census of handicrafts artisans and the

task was given to the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi.<sup>50</sup> But even today what is available is a decade old data on handicraft artisans based on the same NCAER survey report of 1995-96. "Now a complete census of the handicraft artisans is being planned during the 11th Five Year Plan beginning from 2007-08 over the five year period covering 20% of the districts every year, giving due representation to all the major crafts."<sup>51</sup>

So, to conclude, globalization as such is not a 'not-to-be-touched' concept. After all it gives an opportunity for socio-cultural and economic exchanges, interactions and interrelations. But the way the rich countries manipulate and exploit the marginal is a matter of great concern and raise our anxieties. Apart from creating social inequality and different global risks like ecological and health ones, globalization certainly promotes many other unwanted consequences. Therefore Joseph Stiglitz rightly says, "globalization today is not working. It is not working for many of the world's poor. It is not working for much of the environment. It is not working for the stability of the global economy.... The problem however is not with globalization, but how it has been managed"<sup>52</sup>. So, globalization has become a reality, which can't be denied now. The illiterate poor artists and the vulnerable crafts still need strong support from the government, not half-heartedly with a withdrawal motivation, rather in a pure Gandhian way. So the government should spend more money in this sector in promoting and marketing the crafts and giving training to the artisans. "Gandhi believed in simplicity, in voluntary limitation of wants, in self-control and in a non-acquisitive society. So he condemned the modern industrial society based on consumerism- not only because it destroyed nature but because it destroyed mankind."<sup>53</sup> Add to it, various co-operatives, voluntary associations also need to put sincere efforts for the better working condition of the artisans. For example, DWARAKA (Development of Weavers and Rural Artisans in Kalamkari Art), is an organization that supports hundreds of Kalamkari artists of Andhra Pradesh by providing loans for the education of their children and for meeting medical and marriage expenses.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, 'Dastakar', an NGO, facilitates skilled artisans from different states to sell their products through its various exhibitions.<sup>55</sup>

One of the major concerns is that the production base in Indian handicrafts sector is much unorganized. The craftsmen use traditional tools and techniques for which the production base is very weak. So, for improvement in the quality of production, it is necessary to upgrade the skill of the artisans who should be supplied with quality raw material and adequate financial assistance. And last but not the least,

the marketing and export of the products need special attention. The craftsmen should also be properly exposed to the market leaving little room for the intrusion of the middlemen. To make the craft products globally acknowledged and commercially viable, steps should be taken jointly by the ministries of Information, Commerce and Tourism. Besides, the Indian government could make different Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) for export of crafts goods to foreign countries while dealing with trade related agreements.

Gandhi propounded that economic development can be best achieved when the individual is an integral part of the community he is living in, when the production of goods is on a small scale and localised and when the homemade handicrafts are accorded priority attention. He advocated the revival of crafts industry and greater autonomy to village republics. A true application of the Gandhian methodology could save the traditional skill base of our country. Interestingly, multinational institutions like the World Bank, the ADB, and the UNESCO etc are pointing to handicrafts sector and cultural industry as an increasingly important source of employment creation and sustainable income generation and think that support for cultural industries should be redefined as an investment in development rather than as mere expenditure.<sup>56</sup>

Originally started as a part time activity among the rural folks, handicrafts have now transformed into a flourishing sector having sizeable and sustaining market demand and significant economic potential. Needless to say, at present, handicrafts have substantial contribution for employment generation and the country's exports. With the onset of globalization there are enough opportunities for the hand made products of our skillful artists in both domestic and foreign markets. Yet there are risk-prone terrains too. A Gandhian approach to economic development and social progress could not only save many of the traditional crafts that are at the threshold of extinction.

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## Notes and Comments

# Gandhi and Islam

GANDHI WAS A deeply religious Hindu, yet had great respect for Islam and all other religions which for him were different paths to the same goal of achieving union with the Divine. His religion was that which "transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, binds one indissolubly to the truth within and ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which leaves the soul restless until it has found itself". He affirmed: "For me different religions are beautiful flowers from the same garden or branches of the same majestic tree". He often said he was as much a Moslem, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and Parsee as he was Hindu. For him, "The hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray". At his prayer meetings there were readings from all the holy books. His favorite hymn began with the line, "He alone is a true devotee of God who understands the pains and sufferings of others". His religion is therefore best described as "spiritualized humanism". His God was Truth and the way to reach Him was Love and Non-violence.

Gandhi's fundamental contribution in the field of religion was to give primacy to Truth rather than conformity with traditional religious practices. In fact he made Truth the basis of all morality by declaring: "I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality.....God did not create men with the badge of superiority or inferiority; no scripture which labels a human being an inferior or untouchable because of his or her birth can command our allegiance. It is denial of God and Truth which is God". He affirmed: "Independent India as conceived by me will have all Indians belonging to different religions, living in perfect friendship."

In 1931 he wrote in *Young India*, "It has been said that Swaraj will be the rule of the majority community i.e. the Hindus....If this were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it Swaraj and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for to me Hind Swaraj is the rule of all the people and the rule of justice."

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On January 23, 1948, just a week before his assassination he declared, "It would spell the ruin of both the Hindu religion and the majority community if the latter, in the intoxication of power, entertains the belief that it can crush the minority community and establish a purely Hindu Rashtra".

Deeply influenced by and dedicated to the ancient Indian maxims of 'udara charita nam tu vasudaiva kudumbakam' (for the broad minded and enlightened all mankind is one family) and 'sarvadharmasamabhav' (equal respect for all religions), his nationalism embodied "the love of all nations of the earth irrespective of creed." Further, "It is not nationalism that is evil; it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Indian nationalism has, I hope, struck a different path to find full self expression for the benefit and service of humanity at large". His patriotism was "not exclusive" and was "calculated to benefit all in the true sense of the word."

Lauding Gandhi's enlightened approach to all religions, his American biographer Louis Fischer wrote: "Mahatma Gandhi, a supremely devout Hindu, was incapable of discriminating against anyone on account of religion, race, caste, colour or anything. His contribution to the equality of untouchables and to the education of a new generation which was Indian instead of Hindu or Moslem or Parsee or Christian has world significance."

Gandhi's great respect for Jesus Christ and the Holy Koran are revealed in his following statements:

"What does Jesus mean to me? To me, he was one of the greatest teachers humanity has ever had."

"Jesus was the most active resister known perhaps to history. His was non-violence par excellence"

"I have read the Koran more than once. My religion enables me, obliges me, to imbibe all that is good in all the great religions of the earth. I have come to the conclusion that the teaching of the Koran is essentially in favour of non-violence. It holds that non-violence is better than violence. Non-violence is enjoined as a duty, violence is permitted only where necessary."

"The very word Islam means peace, which is non violence"

"A perfect Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands mankind is safe".

"Islam stands for the unity and brotherhood of mankind and not for disrupting the oneness of the human family."

"I rebel against the idea that millions of Indians who earlier were Hindus changed their nationality on adopting Islam as their religion."

"My whole soul rebels against the idea that Hinduism and Islam

represent two antagonistic cultures and doctrines."

During Gandhi's struggle against racial oppression in South Africa many of his staunch supporters were Muslims. On his return to India in 1915 he found few of them in the Congress party. He therefore decided to attempt remedying this and attended the 1917 Muslim League session in Calcutta. At it there was much concern about the fate of Ottoman Turkey, particularly its Caliph's continued control of Islam's holy places. There was ominous talk of "direct action". Gandhi counselled patience and moderation. In 1919, the Indian Khilafat Committee approached Gandhi for his assistance. He agreed to support them and secured the approval, though reluctant, of the Congress party. For 18 months, October 1920 to March 1922, Gandhi led the combined struggle for India's freedom and the revision of the harsh Treaty of Sevres imposed by Britain and France on Turkey. During this period there was close unity between Hindus and Moslems all over India. Gandhi exhorted: "Let Hindus not be frightened by Pan Islamism. It is not anti-Indian or anti - Hindu....Hindus, if they are true friends of Muslims cannot but share the latter's feelings about saving the Turkish Empire in Europe from extinction". Gandhi also supported "Brother Shaukat Ali's proposal" that there should be three national slogans - "Allaho Akbar" (God is great), *Bande Mataram* (Hail, Motherland) and *Hindu - Mussalman ki Jai* (victory to Hindus and Muslims). He also urged Hindus to enthusiastically raise the third slogan since India could not be conceived without "the union of the Hindu and Muslim Heart".

Gandhian scholar B.R. Nanda indicates Gandhi's principal aims in supporting the Khilafat movement were "to prevent it from turning violent and to draw the Muslim community into the orbit of the national movement". He adds that Gandhi achieved "a great measure of success in his first aim but not in the second. The 'grand alliance' between the Congress and the Khilafat organizations did not mature into a permanent Hindu-Muslim accord." However, Gandhi's decision to support the Khilafat agitation is clear proof of his all inclusive approach and keen desire to secure Hindu-Muslim unity.

The impact which Gandhi had on the traditionally violence prone Pathan Muslim community on India's North West frontier was remarkable. Its outstanding, 6'6" foot leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who came to be called "Frontier Gandhi" and latterly has even been extolled as a "Moslem St. Francis", described Gandhi's transformational impact on him thus: "As a young boy, I had violent tendencies; the hot blood of the Pathans was in my veins. But in jail, I had nothing to do except read the Koran. I read about the Prophet Mohammed in Mecca, about his patience, his suffering, his dedication.

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I had read it all before as a child, but now I read it in the light of what I was hearing all around me about Gandhiji's struggle against the British Raj....When I finally met Gandhiji, I learned all about his ideas of non-violence and his Constructive Program. They changed my life forever."

Subsequently he organized a 100,000 strong Pathan army of non-violent warriors, whom he named 'Khudai Khidmatgars' to wage the freedom struggle in the North West Frontier Province. Inspired by him, Pathan women also participated in this struggle confronting British troops with Korans clasped to their chests. The anthem Ghaffar Khan composed for his Khudai Kidmatgars was as under :

We are the army of God by death or wealth unmoved  
We march, our leader and we, ready to die.  
We serve and we love, our people and our cause,  
Freedom is our goal, our lives the price we pay.

A firm believer that all humans are children of the Heavenly Father and that religions are meant to enlighten and unite people rather than embitter and divide them, Gandhi did everything possible to prevent the partition of India. He tried his best to persuade Lord Mountbatten, Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhai Patel on this but failed. He held fourteen long talks with Jinnah in 1944 for this purpose, each time himself going humbly to the latter's residence. He offered the prime ministership to Jinnah provided India was not divided and his government ruled in the interests of the Indian people as a whole, but Jinnah would not relent.

Strongly opposing Jinnah's "Two Nation" argument Gandhi passionately asked: "Why is India not one nation? Was it not one during the Moghul period? Is India composed of two nations? If so why only two? Are not Christians a third, Parsis a fourth and so on? Are the Muslims of China a nation separate from the other Chinese? ....I make bold to say that Jinnah and those who think like him are rendering no service to Islam; they are misrepresenting the message inherent in the very word Islam."

Subsequently, when Pakistan was becoming a reality, he wrote: "The army is going to be divided....This division of the army certainly fills the heart of every patriot with fear and misgivings. Why are two armies being created? Are they to defend the country against foreign aggression or are they to fight each other?"

When Gandhi realized that the partition could not be prevented he focused his efforts on preventing the Hindu-Moslem animosity and killings which he foresaw partition would engender. He constantly urged friendly relations between Hindus and Moslems and India

and Pakistan. He affirmed he belonged to both the soon to be born countries. On July 2, 1947 he stated: "Both India and Pakistan are my country. I am not going to take out a passport for going to Pakistan." On August 15, 1947, India's Independence Day, when the whole country, particularly New Delhi, was celebrating, Gandhi was at Hydari Manzil, an old abandoned Moslem house, at Beliaghata, in one of Calcutta's poorest localities, to stop the communal killings there with personal appeals and by undertaking a fast. His incredible success was commended by Lord Mountbatten thus: "In the Punjab we have 55,000 soldiers and large scale rioting on our hands. In Bengal our forces consist of one man and there is no rioting. May I be allowed to pay my tribute to the one man boundary force". The historian E.W.R. Lumby wrote: "His triumph was complete and the peace that he brought was destined to endure....He had in fact worked a miracle, perhaps the greatest of modern times"

On 27th January 1947, Gandhi attended the annual fair at the revered Kwaja Qutbuddin tomb at Mehrauli and urged all those present there to take a vow "at this holy place" that they would never indulge in nor permit any communal strife.

Gandhi was to travel to Pakistan on February 8, 1948 for a stay there of some months to promote goodwill between India and Pakistan. Sadly, he was assassinated on January 30th by a Hindu fanatic, who detested him for being, according to him, more concerned about the welfare of Moslems and Pakistan rather than of Hindus and India.

Though fully engaged in India's freedom struggle, Gandhi never lost sight of the world and its travails. His world view was all inclusive and broad spectrum. Having studied in England he was well acquainted with its politics, culture and people. He had many friends there particularly among vegetarians, Theosophists, Christian pastors and Liberals. In South Africa among his early supporters were two Jews and a British clergyman. It was through the former he first became aware of feudal oppression in Russia. After he read Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is within You* he became more aware of the deplorable conditions of the Russian peasantry.

The tragedy of Germany's Jews touched him deeply. His great sympathy for the Jews notwithstanding, he did not approve of a separate state for them on Palestinian land.

My sympathy does not blind me to the requirements to Justice. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct. The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war. The nobler course

would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they were born and bred. The Jews born and bred in France are French precisely in the same sense as the Christians born in France are French. Every country is their home, including Palestine, not by aggression but by loving service....

Sixty years after its birth Israel is yet to find security and a peaceful 'modus vivendi' with Palestinians and most of its neighbours.

President Anwar Sadat may or may not have been inspired by Gandhi but in 1977 admitted the truth that Egypt's 1948, 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel (in the last mentioned of which Egypt had notable initial success) were disastrous for it. He abjured war and took the path of non-violent conflict resolution. He made his historic journey to Jerusalem in November 1977. This opened the door to negotiations with Prime Minister Menachem Begin and led, with President Carter's good offices, to the historic Camp David Accord of September 1978. In March 1979, Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty that formally ended the state of war that had existed between them for 30 years. Soon thereafter, mutual diplomatic relations were established. By June 1982 Egypt regained from Israel all territory it had lost since the 1967 war.

In 1994 Jordan's King Hussein took the same path as President Sadat and also secured a peace treaty and diplomatic relations with Israel.

Richard Clarke, Counter Terrorism Director under Presidents Clinton and George Bush until he resigned in March 2003, in his book *Against All Enemies* writes: "Instead of addressing the Al Qaeda threat with all the attention it required after 9/11, we went off on a tangent, off after Iraq, off on a path that weakened us and strengthened the next generation of Al Qaedas." Karen Armstrong in her book *Islam – A Short History* echoes the same sentiment: "The world changed on September 11th. We now realize that we in the privileged Western countries can no longer assume that events in the rest of the world do not concern us. What happens in Gaza, Iraq or Afghanistan today, is likely to have repercussions in New York, Washington or London tomorrow and small groups will soon have the capacity to commit acts of mass destruction previously only possible for powerful nations".

It is alleged that terrorist acts generally emanate from Moslem countries. The reputed American historian Samuel Huntington gives an honest clue to its cause, in his book *The Clash of Civilizations*. He writes: "The West's efforts to universalize its values and institutions, to maintain its military and economic superiority, and to intervene in conflicts in the Muslim world generate intense resentment among

Muslims. During the fifteen years between 1980 and 1995, the US engaged in 17 military operations in the Middle East, all of them directed against Muslim states. No comparable pattern of US military operations occurred against the people of any other civilization."

In an era of asymmetric warfare and an illicit arms trade, including in components of weapons of mass destruction, Gandhi's truth, justice, and non-violent conflict resolution path is the safest for all political leaders, nations, corporations and individuals to follow. To avert the scourge of terrorism, much more imperative and effective than high tech security and preemptive strikes is to remove anger, hate and the thirst for revenge from people's minds and hearts and replace these with hope based on Truth and Justice. The grave problem of terrorism is as much a symptom of hateful delirium gestated by iniquitous domestic, foreign and corporate policies, as it is of evil mindsets.

I would like to end with two quotations from the Holy Koran:  
"God has given the sun a shining glory,  
And the moon a wondrous light,  
And through their measured beauty,  
People have the count of time  
And learn the number of years.  
He has created these to advance righteousness and Truth,  
And to explain His signs to people who understand"  
Surah 10 : 5

"O believers, be seekers after Justice, witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves or your parents and kinsmen."  
Surah 4 : 133

The Holy Koran's emphasis on Truth, Justice and righteousness is crystal clear. Gandhi voiced the same message with his affirmation that "Peace is possible only where Truth is pursued, and Truth implies Justice". What the world greatly needs today is not a "war on terrorism" but a war on untruth, injustice, oppression and war itself.

*This is a bridged version of a talk delivered by the author at Syarif Hidayatullah, State Islamic University, Djakarta, Indonesia on May 15, 2007.*

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## Corruption: Gandhian Decentralisation is the Way Out

IN INDIA, BEFORE the entry of the British, the methods of production and of industrial and commercial organisation could match with those in any other part of the world. The quality of manufactured goods, which had a big market in Europe, essentially attracted foreign adventurers. Such was the skill of India's artisans and craftsman that they could even compete successfully with goods produced in England using more advanced technology. This was the reason the British East India Company initially focused on trade with Europe in Indian goods, which yielded enormous profits.

The continuous trade in Indian goods and the industrial revolution that followed created a new class of capitalists in England. This class demanded a change in the policy. As per the new policy, the British market was to be closed to Indian products and the Indian market in contrast was opened to British manufacturers. Other vigorous attempts to restrict and crush Indian manufacturers to prevent the flow of Indian goods within the country itself were also made. This resulted in the collapse of the Indian industry.

The British rule had come to an end after a largely non-violent struggle. The new government was caught in a fix to choose among the ongoing policies of development the world over.

An economy in which the state would have a large role to play in the amelioration of the conditions of the general masses was finally evolved. This concept of mixed economy along with the Parliamentary form of government provided a development direction to the Indian polity.

No one can deny the fact that in India cases of corruption and negligence by public officials, both at the State and Central levels, have been on the increase. There are some established channels through which complaints regarding maladministration can be processed. In the first place, there are the courts of law; but they are quite often not in a position to control corruption. Courts are too much over-burdened with civil and criminal cases. The methods adopted by the courts to deal with cases of corruption and negligence, in many cases, involve a lengthy procedure. An aggrieved citizen may fail to get an appropriate remedy from the courts if adequate evidence against the erring officials is not available or if the administration does not produce government records. In 1958 the



Law Commission suggested the establishment of a separate division of the High Court to be called Administration Division for settlement of the disputes of an administrative nature. But this recommendation has not been implemented so far.

Secondly, so far as courts are concerned, where the complainant or plaintiff satisfies judiciary that a public authority has failed to carry out a legal obligation or has acted without legal authority or has failed to follow the correct procedure, it has the power to issue orders which must be complied with, through writs such as 'mandamus', 'prohibition' and 'certiorari' or through 'injunctions' and 'declaration'. Wrongful administrative conduct resulting in a breach of statutory duty may give rise to an action for damages in tort or in contract.

In the parliamentary form of government, the legislature is another forum for raising grievances of citizens. It is the duty of the members to represent their constituents and to raise their grievances in the legislature and have them redressed. One of the important methods of raising the grievances is by putting questions to ministers about cases of maladministration or abuse of power. Questions of police excess and tortures are very frequently raised in the Parliament and State Assemblies through questions. There are, however, certain limitations to the method of raising grievances. First, a member can raise only a limited number of questions during a session. Secondly, individual cases cannot be raised unless they involve a question of general policy. Consequently, members do not usually put questions unless issues of grave political implications are involved. Questions are put primarily for eliciting information and when the ministers reply, request for action may be made and undertaking from the ministers obtained.

Other parliamentary methods are 'calling attention notice' and 'adjournment motions'. These methods can also be adopted when grave questions of public, police or administration are involved. As the adjournment motion is treated as a motion of censure, the government is always on the defensive and very little by way of redress can be expected out of these methods. Thus, Parliament does not exercise control over administration in the same way as the Ministers and their Senior Administrative Officers exercise control over their subordinates, nor even in the same way as do the courts. One can see that political control by Parliament often proves illusory particularly in countries where the Cabinet form of government prevails. Resignation is the only effective sanction that Parliament can press for if it feels that the Minister is culpable. But the government of the day, generally substitutes the collective responsibility of the

Cabinet for individual ministerial accountability. The political realities of parliamentary life in short are such that parliamentary control over administrative action is more nominal than real.

The question of maladministration may also be dealt with by a committee of the Lok Sabha which is known as Petitions Committee which has been in existence since 1954. The object of this committee is to redress the grievances of the petitions against the acts of the executive. The committee has been submitting periodic reports all these years, but they have not been fruitful in checking maladministration.

Besides, it must be said the government is not always unmindful of misuse of powers by the bureaucracy and, therefore, occasionally institutes public inquiries into the misconduct of officials. But the main defect in this is that it is only on rare occasions that reports are accepted and effect is given to the recommendations.

Another mechanism for investigation of administrative misconduct is Vigilance Commission established by the Central and State Governments. These Commissions do not enjoy a constitutional or statutory status, and therefore, they have failed to give relief to the aggrieved parties.

What constitutes corruption? The Santhanam Committee, which looked into the issue, stated that "the problem of corruption is complex having roots and ramifications in society as a whole". The Committee held that "in its widest connotation, corruption includes improper or selfish exercise of power and influence attached to a public office or to the special position one occupies in public office".

According to the Indian Penal Code, "whoever, being or expecting to be a public servant, accepts or obtains, or agrees to accept or obtain from any person for himself or for other persons, any gratification whatever, other than legal remuneration as a motive or reward for doing or forbearing to do any official act for showing or forbearing favour or disfavour to any person" can be said to be engaging in corruption.

A general survey of the history of corruption in the present era reveals that till about the beginning of the Second World War, corruption was prevalent in considerable measure amongst low ranking officials of Revenue, Police, Excise and Public Works Departments. But the wartime controls and scarcities provided ample opportunities for bribery, corruption and favouritism. Securing of some kind of pecuniary or other material advantage, directly or indirectly for self or family, relatives or friends, constitutes the most common form of corruption.

When neither the judiciary nor even the Parliament of the country

is in a position to check corruption, it is in Gandhian policies that we can pin our hopes on. One method is to reform oneself to rise above such temptation. The second option is to make the administration more decentralized and take democracy closer to the people, enabling them to participate meaningfully in matters relating to their day to day life. Power needs to be devolved to the Gram Panchayats. This will make the administration more transparent and accountable to the villagers.

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## Mahatma Gandhi and the Institution of the Guru

MANY ASPECTS OF Mahatma Gandhi's life resonate with mainstream Hinduism. His vegetarianism, his adoption of celibate vows, his belief in rebirth, his fondness for the Geeta—these mark him out as in tune with mainline Hinduism. In one respect, however, he breaks rank—he did not have a guru. He writes:

I believe in the Hindu theory of Guru and his importance in spiritual realization. I think there is a great deal of truth in the doctrine that true knowledge is impossible without a Guru. An imperfect teacher may be tolerable in mundane matters, but not in spiritual matters. Only a perfect *gnani* deserves to be enthroned as Guru. There must, therefore, be ceaseless striving after perfection. For one gets the Guru that one deserves. Infinite striving after perfection is one's right. It is its own reward. The rest is in the hands of God.

Thus, though I could not place Raychandbhai on the throne of my heart as Guru, we shall see how he was, on many occasions, my guide and helper. Three moderns have left a deep impress on my life, and captivated me: Raychandbhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*; and Ruskin by his *Unto this Last*. But of these more in their proper place.

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Mahatma Gandhi offers these remarks while talking about Raychandbhai. He obviously was impressed by Raychandbhai's feats of memory. Raychandbhai was introduced to Mahatma Gandhi as a *shatavadhani*: "one having the faculty of remembering or attending to a hundred things simultaneously." Mahatma Gandhi writes: "I exhausted my vocabulary of all the European tongues I knew, and asked the poet to repeat the words. He did so in the precise order in which I had given them. I envied his gift without, however, coming under its spell." But he goes on to say:

The thing that did cast its spell over me I came to know afterwards. This was his wide knowledge of the scriptures, his spotless character, and his burning passion for self-realization. I saw later that this last was the only thing for which he lived. The following lines of Muktanand were always on his lips and engraved on the tablets of his heart:

"I shall think myself blessed only when I see Him  
In every one of my daily acts;  
Verily He is the thread,  
Which supports Muktanand's life."

It could be argued, however, that Mahatma Gandhi represents a trend in *modern* Hinduism in this respect because many major Hindu figures did not have gurus in the traditional sense. One is thinking here of course of people like Rammohun Roy (1772-1833); Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905); Kesub Chunder Sen (1838-1884); Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941); Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950); and S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975). One is specially thinking here of Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) who upheld the need for having a guru without himself having had a (human) guru.

If the concept of the guru is pared to its core then it seems to contain these two central ideas: (1) that the *guru* assumes *personal* responsibility for guiding the disciple to the ultimate reality and that (2) anything which catalyzes one's spiritual quest along these lines is a *guru*. A paradox lies in the fact that these two points do not always entail each other, although a broad overlap between the two is obvious. That is to say, in principle, some *impersonal* event like an incident in one's life, or a line or a book can catalyze one's spiritual life. However, because it is impersonal, it is difficult to associate the idea of *personal* responsibility with it at least in the conventional sense.

There was no one in Mahatmas Gandhi's who assumed such a responsibility towards him. Although it is conceivable that Mahatma Gandhi may have accepted God in such a role, it is clear that Mahatma Gandhi did not have a guru in this sense. One is tempted to say however that he might have had a guru-experience in a general sense,

or a conversion experience if you will, in the events which he experienced at Maritzburg, where he was not allowed to board the train, and during the rest of his experience en route to Pretoria.

The fact that out of the three major (guruoid) influences mentioned by Mahatma Gandhi, two are books, and their authors are Westerners is significant. Thus one could also claim that, for Mahatma Gandhi, guruship was blind to considerations of religion and nationality.

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## Gandhian View of Poverty Eradication in the Context of Globalization

GLOBALIZATION HAS BECOME the most pressing issue of our time debated from boardrooms to schools all over the world. No part of the world remains untouched by this phenomenon. Globalization, the removal of barriers to free trade and the closer integration of nations, has helped many countries to grow more quickly than they would otherwise have done. Because of globalization many people in the world now live longer than before and their standard of living is improving. It has also reduced the sense of isolation and has given many people in the developing countries access to knowledge well beyond the reach of even the wealthiest a century ago.

The rhetoric of globalization promises to remove backwardness through a worldwide exchange of information and skills in order to establish a truly cosmopolitan culture. The underlying belief is that mutual co-operation and concern for social justice are automatically cared for in this system. In actual practice, since the global order is based on unequal power relations, these concerns are put on the back

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burner. The promised economic benefits are yet to reach the poorer sections of the developing world.

The gap between the richest and poorest countries has been growing for a century or more. On the eve of the First World War in 1913, per capita GDP (total national output divided by population) was 22 times higher in the rich countries. By 1970, it was 88 times higher. But after globalization began to accelerate in the early 1980s, the gap widened dramatically. In 2000, per capita GDP in the rich countries was 267 times that of poorest countries. The people of the world have never been so divided in their standard of living in the entire history of the human race as today. Despite repeated promises of poverty reduction made over the last decade of the twentieth century, the number of people living in poverty has actually increased by almost 100 million. This occurred at the same time that the total world income actually increased by an average of 2.5 percent annually. According to UNDP Annual Report 2006, "Ours is a world of extremes. The poorest 40 percent of the world population – the 2.5 billion people who live on less than \$ 2 a day – account for five percent of global income, while the richest 10 percent account for 54 percent ... yet, more than 800 million people suffer from hunger and malnutrition, 1.1 billion people do not have access to clean drinking water and every hour, 1200 children die from preventable diseases. Despite a growing world economy and significant advances in medicine and technology, many people in developing countries are not reaping the potential benefits of globalization."

Global justice will be a far cry unless bold initiatives are undertaken to overcome these disparities. It has now become necessary to adopt a more humane and equitable strategy of development. The goal of development is not only increase GDP, but also the development of human values and human qualities. It is rightly said that all the efforts to improve human qualities will remain incomplete as long as we do not take proper measures for poverty eradication. Each human being is a wonderful creation of the creator, who is born with great potential but poverty hinders the complete development of individual's inner potential. It is a disgrace for the entire mankind. Because we allow another human being to die of hunger, or malnutrition, or common curable diseases or exposure to climate, we are reduced to lesser human beings. If a particular world system is responsible for creating this massive poverty, we must act to replace it. As Gandhi said, "... in my view a system that admits of poverty and unemployment is not fit to survive even for a day."

This is why Gandhi advocated neither an affluent nor a poor society. The removal of poverty is one of central goals of Gandhi's

programme. To him, a country is free and prosperous, in the true sense of term, only if the basic needs of its citizens are fulfilled: "unless poverty and unemployment are wiped out from India, I would not agree that we have attained freedom. Real wealth does not consist in jewelry and money but in providing for proper food, clothes, education and creating healthy condition of living for every one of us. A country can be called prosperous and free only when its citizen can easily earn enough to meet their needs."

The development model that Gandhi proposed makes different set of assumptions and think of different kind of socio-economic parameters. The central idea that his model aims at, is 'the greatest good of all'. To achieve such an ideal, he was guided by the concept of 'Antyodaya' that is 'putting the last first'. He had the greatest concern for the poorest of the poor and the smallest of the small. He believed that the entire universe is a family, and it is natural that in a family, the tender, the weakest and the smallest receive the greatest attention. We can further gauge the extreme concern of Gandhi for the poor when he offers a talisman or a testing principle when we are in doubt: "Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself: If the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him? ...In other words, will it lead to Swaraj or self-rule for the hungry and also spiritually starved millions of your country? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away."

A mere increase in production, even at a reduced cost per unit, will not solve the problem of poverty. A proliferation of work opportunities for the masses is necessary. Poverty eradication is possible only by increasing work opportunities in the area of food, clothing and shelter. Gandhi was against the grant of doles. He prescribes a "Gospel of work" and not "charity" as means of getting over the state of poverty. He never accepted the idea of giving a free meal to a healthy person who has not worked for it in some honest way. He said, "I would stop every *Sadavarta* where free meals are given. It has degraded the nation and has encouraged laziness, idleness, hypocrisy and even crime." He was against maintaining the poor on charity. He said, "I must refuse to insult the naked by giving them clothes they do not need instead of giving them work which they surely need... God created man to work for his food and said that those who ate without work were thieves".

Poverty is closely related to employment. So the goal before the global economy today is the maximization of employment. It is almost axiomatic that more production leads to more employment. But employment has become the first victim of mechanisation and

technology. On this point Gandhi's vision is very clear: "mechanisation is good when hands are too few for the work intended to be accomplished. It is an evil when there are more hands than required for the work, as is in the case of India." Therefore, Gandhi simply wanted to impose a limit on the use of machinery. He said, "My object is not to destroy the machine but to impose limitations to it." And the limit according to Gandhi is that the use of machinery should not result in unemployment or exploitation of the poor. Explaining it, he says, "I have no objection if all things required by my country would be produced with the labour of 30000 instead of that of three crores. But those three crores must not be rendered idle or unemployed."

Gandhi, therefore, accepted the concept of production by masses. He wrote, "I envisage mass production certainly, but not based on force. After all, the message of the spinning wheel is that. It is mass production, but mass production in people's own homes. If you multiply individual production to millions of time, would it not give you mass production on a tremendous scale?" In his view, consumer goods industries, should be decentralized especially the manufacturing of cloth, edible oil, food processing, leather goods, housing etc., for these activities have a large employment potential.

The present system is based on market economy, the essence of which is the propagation of the culture of consumerism without any consideration of its evil social, moral and economic effects on the general mass. The main consideration in market economy is not benefit of the society but maximization of profit. The humanistic aspect of the relation between consumers and producers has been lost. But under the Gandhian system, the main consideration is benefit of whole society. In this system, the standard of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed. Gandhi was attracted by the concept of a simple society of Tolstoy and Ruskin. His idea of simplicity and equal distribution of income fulfill the basic needs of society and provide maximum happiness to the common masses. According to Gandhi, "We notice that the mind is a restless bird: the more it gets, the more it wants and still remains unsatisfied." Gandhi aimed at ensuring distributive justice and at establishing such an economic system where production and distribution would not be separated. The danger of unchecked production, without proper use of human resources has produced a number of complex problems, which badly affect social and environmental life.

A decentralized economic system of production and distribution can ensure a fuller and proper utilization of human and material



resources. At present, we do not make full use of these resources. According to Gandhi, agriculture by its very nature would remain a decentralized activity. He believed in the organization of rural life along cooperative lines. Even in the field of agriculture, Gandhi recommended co-operative farming which would save labour, capital, tools etc. It will provide employment to all adult villagers and will also increase production. Co-operative activities, said Gandhi, would develop fellow feeling and would abolish poverty and idleness from the village.

Today our problem is not insufficient resources. But unfortunately these are appropriated by a few multi-national companies and their shareholders. There are far more resources today than ever before in human history and despite the fact that there are far more people dependent on them than ever before, our capacity to produce outstrips our population growth. Our problem is not lack of resources; our problem is distribution of resources equitably, to serve the need and not to gratify the greed. Unfortunately, the focus is on greed and greed is insatiable.

It is being realised not only in India, but all over the world that Gandhi's vision of development and approach to rural uplift provide us a humane and equitable model of development. But it is also true that the development of science, industry, technology and management is necessary for socio-economic development and living. So the new development strategy will have to blend Gandhi's vision with new techno-economic realities of the twenty-first century.

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## Astronomy: A Subject of Interest to Mahatma Gandhi

MAHATMA GANDHI WAS a great scholar. To him knowledge was like 'God', who restores the 'Truth'. He was interested in a wide variety of subjects. Basically a law student and busy with India's

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political, social and economic freedom, he had utilised every moment in searching for this 'truth'. In an article in *Navajivan* (05.7.1925) entitled 'Learning and Enjoying', he had first discussed his growing interest in astronomy. He said, "I have never felt old age as an obstacle to devoting myself to learning anything which I believe would take me nearer to the 'God of Truth'. A recent example of this is my desire for a study of the heavens". A thorough study of his correspondence and articles etc. on astronomy reveals that he developed interest in the subject during his stay in prison. He had contacted a number of people known for their expertise in the subject, such as Dr. Ramnathan and Dr. Desai of the Government Observatory, Pune. Seeing his eagerness jail authorities relaxed their rules and permitted Gandhi to set up a telescope in the jail yard to observe the sky at night. He had collected a good number of books on astronomy and wrote two articles on it between 1922 and 1933.

Gandhi considered it unnecessary to study higher mathematics to learn astronomy. He added that his interest in the subject was not professional. He had been reading numerous books on the subject. With the aid of the apparatuses, he could see more of the universe. The apparatuses were delicate, simple to operate and easily adjustable. He said, "To be lying on your back in the open air on a starry night and regarding the universe in an immeasurable expanse, you cannot help becoming a worshipper of God. My mind leaps with joy as I do so. Oh, it is marvellous!" In this article I have tried to re-discover this interesting period of Gandhi's life.

He had started thinking about learning this subject in Yeravda jail, where he was detained from March 1922 to February 1924. He wrote, "I know, of course, that astronomy could be a very interesting study if the subject was taught through direct observation of the heavens... knowing that I had to spend six years in jail, I had thought that I would learn to converse with these denizens of the sky..." But at that time his wish was not fulfilled. He was released from jail early, on account of his illness. Gandhi felt that, "The God who rules our fate sent me out,.....and so I remained without knowledge of the solar system. I envy Shri Shankarlal, who with a book in hand, had started every night making the acquaintance of the stars. I have before me an illustration, in a handwritten newspaper, of how one may enjoy learning this subject."

Mahatma Gandhi had an inner vision about this subject. He explained: "I was induced to study the sky, when I accidentally found that it had become for me a means of seeing God, I looked at it on... Kaka was with me. He induced me much... I was induced several times to see Cassiopeia...But at this time the thought came to me

suddenly that the sight of the sky was equivalent to a religious association. The stars were silently talking with us. I do not wish to dilate upon all these thoughts. In short what I want to say is that when everything becomes a religious lesson for me, then only I dive into it and now I cannot come out of it." Again he had expressed his view to Kakasaheb and wrote: "...Looking at the sky the impression we get of infinity, of purity, of order and of grandeur is one that purifies us. I may perhaps be ... able to reach the planets and get... the same experience of good and evil that one gets here on earth. But truly divine is the peaceful influence of their beauty and coolness at this great distance. Also when once we are able to establish communion with the heavens it does not matter where we may happen to be. It then becomes like receiving the Ganga in one's own home. All these thoughts have made me a keen watcher of the infinite skies." He conveyed his feeling to the people and wrote: "....I believe that millions of people can, without much difficulty acquire enough knowledge of them for their own satisfaction and raise themselves spiritually. Anybody who tries to study the stars from a spiritual point of view will easily experience true joy of the heart and will be filled with greater devotion to God. I do not know whether this is true of all, but I do know that such was the effect on me and that is why I have kept up the practice."

It was not emotion that motivated his study but it included a detailed study and scientific observation of the sky. On 13 April, 1931 Gandhi requested Prabhudas Gandhi to write about the stars and planets that would be useful for new entrants in the field like he himself. Gandhi knew that Kakasaheb had the knowledge to do so, but he was too busy at that time. Gandhi was also interested in finding answers to his queries about constellation, such as why the Orion is called a hunter and Sirius a dog etc. He asked Prabhudas to give him pictures of the stars.

Gandhi's observation of sky is noted in two articles. He advised everybody to observe the stars from a fixed place and at a fixed time. He wrote : "Akash means space...our earth is surrounded by infinite space... the akash is empty space. If we imagine this space to have an axis, we shall have to imagine it to be of infinite length." He described about the four stars or cluster of stars, and clarified that the 'Mrigashersha' is known in the west as 'Orion'. In his own words:

The constellation is imagined to be a hunter. To the east, there are very bright stars in a straight line. They are imagined to be the hunters' dogs. The star in the west is the bigger dog and the one to the north is the smaller dog. The cluster of stars which we see to its east and south,

'below the stars, which forms the fourth angle of the figure, is imagined to be a hare. The dogs are running towards it. The three stars in the middle are the jewels in the hunter's waist-band. Those stars have also been shown as representing the following figures: The bigger of the two dogs is called 'Laubdhak' among us, and those three stars represent the deer's stomach. The stars to the south represent the arrow shot by Lubdhak. The three stars to the north outside represent the deer's head.

In the 'Saptarshi Mandal' group, Gandhi saw only three, "...two members of the rectangle and the one at the end of the tail, which is called 'Dhruva'... Both these groups seem to revolve round Dhruva. Here we find it very interesting to watch their motion every night. Their positions change continually all through the night. If we note these positions from time to time, we would find that they trace quite a big arch. In the west, these two groups are called the Great Bear and the Little Bear respectively... The Great Bear is also known as the plough. The Saptarshi serves as a clock during the night. After some experience, we can always know the time of the night from the position of the 'Saptarshi'."

On April 1932 he wrote: "At 8 p.m. there shall be a grand figure at the sky in the west. And that year this was the bright half of the month when there was constellations with a pale light." Then he noted: "I shall only tell you that from the description of the position of this constellation in the Vedas, Tilak Maharaj was able to ascertain the date of the Vedas. We have in the Ashram library, a copy of the treatise by Shri Dikshit which gives plenty of information on this subject. My job is only to arouse interest in this direction. Once that is done, I myself shall learn more about this subject from the inmates of the Ashram. For me, these constellations have become a means of communion with God."

Mahatma Gandhi had read the books, and at night he had observed a particular star carefully. In a letter to Kakasaheb on 12th February 1933 he wrote that, "I have been rising at three these days and find Jupiter and Mars right over my head." Then he informed him that he was expecting a big telescope on Monday. The jail authorities had allowed astronomical literature to come to Gandhi. And lady Vithaldas had given him an astronomical telescope on loan. After that Gandhi had applied to the jail authorities for allowing Dr. Ramnathan and Desai of the Government observatory, Pune, to come into the jail yard for about half an hour after the stars were observable. They put the telescope at the right position and also gave the direction for use. But Gandhi was informed that the Government could not relax the rule...."by which no visitors are allowed inside the jail after

lock-up, as this would disturb the jail routine and prevent the staff going off duty." Another information had come from the 'Associated Press' on March 28, 1933. According to the press two telescopes were "lent to Gandhi by Lady Premila Thackersey of Pune and those were placed in the open yard of Yeravda jail and presented an unusual spectacle amidst the severe simplicity of the jail surroundings."

In 1932 Prof. J.P. Trivedi had sent him three books by James Jeans, namely 'The Universe Around Us; 'Mysterious Universe'; and 'The Stars in their Course'. All these three books are now preserved in the National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi. After reading them during his epic fast against the separate electorate proposal, Gandhi gifted all these books to Kakasaheb, who was then a prisoner in the Sabarmati jail, and inscribed Kaka's name in Hindi in his own hand writing on those three books.

During his study of astronomy he also thought of publishing books on the subject in Indian languages and in which he wished to incorporate some knowledge about physics. He had noted, "It should be written with villagers in view," and should include "an account of all discoveries to date in the field".

After that period Gandhi could not devote much time to study, but he disclosed his eagerness to search for a new way of studying nature. We know that he did not believe in idol worship, but believed in eternity. In his own words,... "The human body is insignificant, it has indeed great value, for it is the house of the 'atman', in truth of the 'Paramatman', of the God of Truth, if we but realize it.....if we fill our imagination with the heavens and realizing the meaning of their vastness, understand our utter insignificance, all our pride would vanish. If the countless shining divinities in the sky did not exist, we would not have come into existence... Hence, we ought to try and know something about our benefactors the shining divinities gliding in the sky."

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## Book Reviews

**Gopal Krishna Gandhi**, ed. *Gandhi is Gone, Who Will Guide us Now? Towering personalities like Nehru, Prasad, Azad, Vinoba, Kriplani and Others Introspect* (Translated from Hindi by Gopal Gandhi and Rupert Snell), Permanent Black, Ranikhet, Distributed by Orient Longman Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2007, pp 192.

With the advent of independence, the people of India, particularly the poor, thought that rivers of milk and honey would flow in the country. It was thought that the tears from the eyes of the people would be wiped off and everybody would get two square meals a day. No doubt, the country has made tremendous progress in agriculture, industry, technology and human resource development. Democracy has also survived despite many aberrations. The representative democracy that emerged has not become participatory in the real sense of the term. People have lost faith and confidence in both public and private institutions to deliver services to them. This is evident in the famous remark of the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that out of Rs. 100 spent for rural development, only Rs. 15 reaches the people.

There is so much misrule and corruption in the political and administrative structure that ordinary people have lost confidence in them. The government, which should be for the people, has now become a government of a coterie. We should recall Gandhi's dictum that what is morally wrong can never be politically correct, and bad means can never justify good ends.

This was precisely the reason Mahatma Gandhi had planned the convening of a conference in Sevagram on 2 February 1946. The object was to think through the future equations of the larger 'Gandhi Family' consisting of the political and non-political associates of the Mahatma. It was also to specifically determine the nature of role of those who had joined public office and those who continued to do 'constructive work'. His last profound message was that in a democratic society political parties must regard politics to be a form of 'public service' and not a means to 'dominate' fellow citizens. The Sevagram event was intended to incorporate this cherished goal. But this did not materialise due to his untimely assassination. Thus, both political India and the human kind lost an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of

a new moral and just political, economic, and social order.

The conference, however, took place at the initiative and instance of Rajendra Prasad and Vinoba Bhave from 11 to 15 March 1948. The theme of the conference was: "Gandhi is gone. Who will guide us now?" About 50 stalwarts participated in the deliberations, discussions and dialogue for five days. Heart to heart dialogue that took place was like a win-win situation in which each benefits while enlightening the other in exchange. It is not about 'converting' the other, but about enriching both oneself and the other through the foundational experience of working with and under the guidance of Gandhi. What we must address today is the brazen mobilization of political power, not just as a political, social and cultural affirmation of a group's or party's identity, but as an orchestrated political campaign to capture and manipulate collective power. This only alienates people from the Gandhian path and empties them of all genuine faith. This process has to be prevented; the choice is a collective one, but it is still ours to make.

The body that emerged from the enlightened discussions was the Sarva Seva Sangh (SSS). It was mandated to carry forward the vision of the Mahatma, namely to build a casteless and non-exploitative society based on truth and non-violence in which every individual and group got full opportunity to develop. The 'Sarvodaya Samaj' set up in March 1948 functions under SSS's inspiration. The primary purpose of the Samaj is to provide a platform to non-members, friends and well-wishers of the Sarvodaya movement to meet together, at least every alternate year, to exchange views on matters of people's common interest.

The SSS has followed the ideals conceived by the Mahatma directly and through its various sister organizations and institutions that were in existence during the time of independence and some new ones created since then. A fascinating example is the Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health (SEARCH). It is founded to serve the tribal people. It had led an anti-alcohol movement in Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra and brought about total prohibition since 1988. It is estimated that at that time people used to spend Rs. 210 million per year buying liquor in comparison to the development budget of the government of Rs. 140 million. Also, the village health care model developed by SEARCH resulted in decline of infant mortality rate (IMR) in 39 contiguous villages from 121 per 1000 new born in 1988 to 30 in 2003. This was achieved without other developmental inputs or programmes. This shows how sincere, dedicated and selfless volunteers can bring about desirable change in Indian society.



The editor deserves congratulations for bringing to light these facts to the notice of the intellectuals and public after a lapse of almost six decades. He has done an excellent job with his faithful translation from the Hindi version to English. A reading of it will clear mustiness from our minds. It will also serve as a guide to political leaders and others intending to serve people rather than exploit them. It may also help us to motivate and harness the spirit of young people to work in remote areas for larger causes. This is an indispensable work for all those who are devoted to and interested in a peaceful national as well as international order. Let us encourage younger generations to actively participate in the political affairs of their respective countries and raise the flag of moral fibre high as prescribed by Gandhi.

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**Jaggi R Krishan**, *Science and Spirituality – A Commentary on Srimad Bhagavad Geeta*, Cork Hill Press, Carmel, USA, 2004, pp. 231.

This is a unique book. It has very systematically discussed science and spirituality in the context of Srimad Bhagavad Geeta. Its main contention is that there has to be a balance between materialism and spiritualism. In the mad race for more and more we have created lots of problems for humankind. We do not mind dominating and exploiting others for our personal gains. The Geeta exhorts us that we must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools.

The author cites a case of Mr. Doraiswamy who was kidnapped and kept under custody for fifty four days. The kidnappers did not object to his praying. He believed in the Geeta which helped him to withstand the ordeal. The spirituality contained in the Geeta turned militants into friends.

The message of the Geeta to Arjun was to perform his duty and not to waver. The world was meant for noble men and women. We should all know that the right and good path are not easy to traverse.

The author has critically examined the seven-step process by which man can go to complete ruin by satisfying his desires to acquire material objects or goods. These are: (1) man dwelling in sense objects develops attachment for them, (2) from attachment springs desires, (3) from

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unfulfilled desires ensue anger, (4) from anger arises obscurity, (5) from obscurity loss of memory, (6) from loss of memory, loss of reason, and, (7) from loss of reason, one goes to complete ruin. This can be overcome by controlling mind and senses. The most important endeavour has to be to strive for morality in all our actions. Only morality in our actions can give us beauty and dignity in life.

We should withdraw all our senses from the sense objects as a turtle does. Helping others without strings is the worship of God. Living a life of Ahimsa (non violence) in thought, speech and deed is a service to God.

There are three categories of persons: Satvee, Rajas and Tamas. Satvee means spiritually pure with inclination to treat others as equals; Rajas means quasi-spiritual, profiteering without caring, treating others as not quite equals; Tamas means inclination to rob others of their livelihood.

The main lesson of the Geeta is in winning over ourselves. Gandhi had eloquently said: "to conquer the subtle passion seems to be harder than physical conquest of the world by the force of arms".

The restless mind can be brought under control by constant practice and by exercise of dispassion. Failing that we may meet the same fate as the moths rush with great speed into the blazing fire for their own extinction.

The Geeta says complete knowledge is possible when we learn both manifest and non-manifest divinity.

The difference between the material and spiritual pursuit is that the former is based on possession while the latter is based on self-realisation, liberation and non-possessiveness.

The book owes its origin to the inspiration from the author's mentor and former distinguished Professor of Physics late Dr. D.S. Kothari. The author has done full justice to the subject and has added a new dimension to the study of the Geeta. The readers will find exciting examples and appropriate verses cited to prove the eternal relevance of the Geeta in the context of science and spirituality. India failed when it deviated and opted for material development minus moral development.

I would like to compliment the author for the stupendous efforts he has put in for studying reputed commentators and scholars of the Geeta. He has cautioned us not to allow "we feelings" to disappear. Sharing and sacrifice should become our motto to live in harmony as citizens of the world.

The volume provides us an in-depth study of the Geeta. It tells us that our ego is like a mirage and all tribulations that touch it will pass away. If we begin to think that in some form or other we live in

others, then we will love others as ourselves. This idea provides the best way to live peacefully on earth. The principles enunciated in the Geeta are as relevant today as they were in the time of the Mahabharata. The Geeta may continue to be enigmatic for all those who fail to see consistency in the words of wisdom and actions and who believe that science, as it is conceived today, has answers to all the ills humanity faces.

The secret of happiness and peace lie in pure and beautiful thoughts. As we sow, so shall we reap. The Geeta's message is that "happiness is within". But we continue to search for happiness not within but without. The book opens new vistas for research in science and the Geeta.

K.D. Gangrade

**Hari Shankar Prasad**, *The Centrality of Ethics in Buddhism: Exploratory Essays*, Motilal Banarsidas (P) Ltd, Delhi, 2007, pp. 602, Rs. 795.

There are many good books on Buddhism available in the libraries, but this book would be welcomed for its clear and lucid exposition on the central issue of Buddhist ethics. Before it talks of the main theme, it explains in a simple language what the essential features of Buddhism are, how it developed over the centuries since the time of Buddha, and above all, how it differs from the beliefs and practices of Hinduism from which it originated.

In the *Introduction* itself the author clearly stresses that Buddhism does not believe in the existence of a Creator or God. He writes that man is endowed with ethical disposition by birth and that he can transform himself through self effort only – not through divine grace, and that humanity as a community of sufferers is "structured along ethical lines and not through divine structuring". Buddhism, while rejecting the theory of divine creation treats *atman* "not as immutable eternal part of man but as a cluster of dynamic factors". He further writes that Buddhism does not believe in the Upanishadic claim of attaining liberation through realization of *atman* with Brahman or any external agency.

The author emphasizes that Buddhism follows the middle path avoiding extremes of self indulgence or self mortification and shifts focus from religious dogmas to the immediate ethical concerns of man and his efforts at ethical purification. The book also explains the two forms of meditation techniques in Buddhism – *samatha* and

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*vipassana* and the difference between them. One school of thought believes the former is preparatory to the other while another school maintains that the two are independent, the former belief being more acceptable.

In the lengthy Part III, which dwells on *Buddhism on Ethics and Karma*, containing four chapters, Prasad first gives a brief overview of the Vedic and Brahmanic notions of *karma*. He then reiterates that Buddhism is essentially a religion of ethics without God or divine metaphysical principles. The ethical progress is based on a strong emphasis on transformation and ethicisation of human consciousness and the entire humanity. In this scheme the regulative principle – be it *nibana* of an individual, or *altruism* of *bodhisattva* or restructuring of humanity, is always ethical. The development of spiritual and ethical possibilities of an individual through self effort, independent of any divine agency is possible through the three-pronged strategy involving ethical purification and practices (*sila*), contemplative attentiveness (*samadhi*) and developing wisdom (*panna*). Buddhism accepts the centrality of mind of an individual which can analyse rational and irrational elements of ethical theories both Vedic and non-Vedic and stresses strict adherence to cardinal, moral values (*sila*). According to Buddhism, all religious traditions lacked the human freedom for ethical action since they believed in an external agency – God or Holy Scriptures. There are conceptual problems also on the concept of Karma. For example, writing on Karma, the author states: “Karma doctrine which shaped and guided Indian life for ages, has created lots of conceptual problems for intellectuals as it is not an empirically verifiable theory”.

As a matter of fact the book would be welcomed for not only its insightful analysis of the central issues of Buddhism but also for the neat exposition of the various topics of Hinduism and the different interpretations on certain key issues like existence and belief in God, rebirth and reincarnation, the nature of man and his disposition, practices and rituals like sacrifices or bathing in a river, etc.

In the chapter on *Classical Indian Ethics*, the author gives a panoramic view of Hindu thought and practices and delineates the essential features of Hinduism as it developed from the Vedic and pre-Vedic to Upanishadic periods. He extensively cites Professor Rajendra Prasad’s analysis of *nishkama karma* and *bhakti* in the *Bhagwad Gita*, including Arjun’s conflict between *swadharma* and *kuladharma* and *samanya dharma*. According to him Rajendra Prasad is strongly critical of Krishna’s teachings to Arjun on *nishkama karma* (desirelessness) because it would typically lead to condoning any killing. Rajendra Prasad’s comments on *moksha* are also given extensive coverage by

the author. In fact, the chapter was written in the form of an essay as part of a book published in honour of Rajendra Prasad and hence the lengthy treatment.

It would have been better if the author had included the commentaries of other writers on various aspects of Hinduism to make the chapter more balanced and comprehensive.

The book also discusses the advantages/disadvantages of moral values and rules. Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* presents a detailed path to moral purification that involves cultivation of virtues, consciousness, knowledge and understanding or wisdom.

According to Buddhaghosa, "A virtuous man is free from remorse, enjoys a great fortune and good reputation.."

On the other hand, a "non-virtuous man without rectitude lives in penury, enters an assembly of men shyly and confused, meets a painful death".

Talking of virtue, he adds, "there is no scent like virtue. There is no other means that can climb to *nibana*. There is no other thing like virtue which can ornament a man in a better way. But there has to be a synthesis of *sila*, *samadhi* and *panna* in right proportions." For Buddhism separation of *sila* and *panna* is dangerous as the former without the latter lacks true rectitude and conviction and ends in mere rituals and formal adherence to moral values.

The author also emphasizes that awakening in Buddhism is the basic foundation of morality and develops ability and rationality in man. But knowledge, ability and rationality are self acquired, not bestowed on by any external agency like God.

The chapter contrasts the caste morality of Hindus vs. intellectual morality of Buddhism. Unlike the Hindus the Buddhists take the entire humanity as one species of men. If a division between men is to be made, it should be in terms of one's achievement in the development of goodness (*sila*) and wisdom (*panna*).

What makes one a Brahmin? According to Buddhist understanding the answer is:

"It is *arahathood* which makes one a Brahmin and an *arahat* is one who has overcome the ignorance about the four noble truths, destroyed the five intoxicants (*asava*) and perfected virtues". The author elaborates on the concepts of wisdom and virtue by his reference to *Ambatthasutta* and *Sonandandasutta* where Buddhism analyses the true qualities of a true Brahmin and virtuous person.

The author has produced a monumental work based on his researches spread over several years, consulting various scholars and original writings right from pre-Vedic period. However, as the title of the book itself suggests, the book consists of essays which have

already appeared, either in the original form or as edited versions, in various books and journals. To that extent there is often repetition and occasionally contradictions or differences in his approach to the various themes contained in these essays. There are also several typographical errors and occasionally wrong or imprecise use of the language. These could have been removed through a careful process of copy-editing.

Although the book is a storehouse of informed and detailed account of Buddhist thought and practices on the concepts of Karma, life and reincarnation and fundamental differences with Hindu thought, it appears that the later chapters on *interculturality* and *time* are outside the purview of the main theme of ethics. The author tries to find some commonalities between the Buddhist and Leibniz' conceptions of time by what he calls 'an intercultural study of time' and finds that the two approaches are remarkably similar, although he himself admits that it is a risky business to cover the two approaches in a few pages. Except for the fact that the two treat time not as an independent entity but in relation to other events or to space, it is difficult to comprehend the author's analysis of the subject which is rather abstract. The other difficulty, as the author also acknowledges, is that one has to contend with several philosophical schools of Buddhism which have different conceptions of time while comparing them with Leibniz' conception. However one has difficulty in understanding why Part VI finds a place in a book on Buddhist ethics since the two are thematically different.

Moreover, chapter fifteen on time where the author discusses the western concepts of time as enunciated by Newton, Leibniz and later scientists like Mach, Poincare and Albert Einstein, especially Einstein who is well known for his special theory of relativity, there is a lack of understanding and depth which is not the case in other parts of the book. Perhaps, the author is not to blame because understanding of time and its relation to space, require a different starting point – a mathematical and physical approach and treatment and not just a philosophical one.

Professor Prasad writes: "Despite proposing space and time as ideal mathematical concepts, Leibniz remained guided by his metaphysical and theological attitudes ... whereas Newton constructed the same on a mathematical model which is still the model of space and time..."

The author is right on the difference of approaches of Newton and Leibniz, but needs to be informed that Newton's model of space and time as distinct dimensions has been modified by the Einstein model which is based on space and time as a joint four-dimensional

construct. This model as enunciated by Einstein in his special theory of relativity has far reaching consequences – that time and matter are no longer absolute but are functions of the velocity of the observer relative to which the events are taking place or alternatively the velocity of the events relative to the observer. And if this velocity approaches the velocity of light, then time and matter lose their absoluteness. Einstein also showed that matter and energy are interchangeable, a concept that gives rise to atomic and nuclear energy.

Despite some of these shortcomings, this book is a welcome addition to the literature on Buddhism. It is especially useful in comparing various concepts like morality, ethics, virtues, *nirvana*, *karma*, rebirth etc., found in Vedic and Upanishadic philosophy and Buddhist thought and writings. Professor H. S. Prasad has produced a profound and absorbing book that should be of interest to scholars and lay readers alike.

Ravi P. Bhatia

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### **Professor M.P. Mathai joins as Editor of Gandhi Marg**

Professor M. P. Mathai, former Professor and Director, School of Gandhian Thought and Development Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, Kerala, has joined *Gandhi Marg* as Editor. Professor Mathai started his career as a lecturer in English at St. Peter's College rising to become its Principal. He joined Mahatma Gandhi University in 1988. His acclaimed doctoral thesis on Gandhi's World View was published by the Gandhi Peace Foundation. A well-known figure in the field of Gandhian activism and scholarship, he is one of the founding members of the National Alliance for People's Movements. He has lectured extensively in the US and Mexican Universities and Chaired important panel discussions. He is also a member of the Governing Board of the Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi. *Gandhi Marg* henceforth will be jointly edited by Professor Mathai and Professor John Moolakkattu

### **Gandhi Marg Editor selected as the first Gandhi-Luthuli Chair**

Professor John S. Moolakkattu has been selected as the Gandhi-Luthuli Professorial Chair in Peace Studies instituted by the ICCR at University of KwaZulu- Natal, South Africa. An alumnus of Jawaharlal Nehru, Hyderabad, Bradford and Mahatma Gandhi Universities, Dr. John has published on a wide range of topics and has served as visiting research fellow at the Department of Politics, Lancaster University (U.K) and Fulbright Visiting Lecturer at the centre for Justice and Peace Building, Eastern Mennonite University (US). He will take up the assignment in July



### Information for Authors

Gandhi Marg is the quarterly interdisciplinary journal of the Gandhi Peace Foundation published from New Delhi in the months of March, June, September and December every year. Original contributions on themes of national and international importance falling under the broad area of Gandhian Studies are invited from scholars and practitioners. Articles submitted to Gandhi Marg are refereed, normally by members of the Editorial and Advisory Boards. It is presumed that an article submitted to Gandhi Marg is original, and has not been under the consideration of any another journal. In general, the articles should not exceed 8000 words including notes and references.

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**Chapters within Books:** Pearl S. Buck, "A Way of Living", in S. Radhakrishnan, ed., *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1956), p. 51

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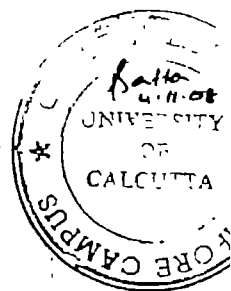
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Gandhi Peace Foundation  
New Delhi

# GANDHI MARG



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USHA THAKKAR

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# Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.: Champions of a Nonviolent World

*Walter Earl Fluker*

**Forty years ago**

NEARLY FORTY YEARS ago, at the Mason Temple in Memphis, Tennessee, a weary and wounded Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed a capacity crowd on the eve of his assassination. Despite storm warnings these people had come to hear him speak; and he, despite other warnings of death threats on his life, had come to rehearse the old dream that he had heard from his forebearers about a new land of freedom and harmony among the peoples of the earth. That fateful evening, with moving oratory and in a panoramic flight of the imagination, he took a poetic excursion through the history of Western civilization. He traveled with the Almighty from the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt across the Red Sea (but he wouldn't stop there); he journeyed through the great Hellenistic Period where he contemplated the lofty and eternal ideas of reality with Euripides, Aristophanes, Plato, Aristotle and all the classical philosophers of Greece (but he wouldn't stop there); he paused at the great heyday of Roman civilization and made note of the developments in law and science that would shape the future of the Euro-western world (but he wouldn't stop there); he reflected on the richness of the cultural and aesthetic contributions of the Renaissance (but he wouldn't stop there); he stood over the shoulders of a vacillating president named Abraham Lincoln and witnessed the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation (but he wouldn't stop there); he sat in sympathetic appreciation of a president struggling with the trials of the Great

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Depression (but he wouldn't stop there); and finally, he arrived in the latter half of the twentieth century. He said that if he had opportunity to live in any of these respective eras, he would have asked the Almighty to let him live in this particular period of history. He said he was pleased to live during this chaotic and precarious age because he believed that this was a great moment for the revelation of God's purposes in the world. King said:

I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough, can you see the stars. And I see God working in this period of the twentieth century in a way that men, in some strange way, are responding—something is happening in our world. The masses of the people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee—the cry is always the same—"We want to be free."<sup>1</sup>

So, with wearied brow and the premonition of death surrounding him, in his last public sentences, he, like the prophets and seers of old, spoke of a vision, which is as old as human strivings and embraces a reality that comes from the future. He said:

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And he has allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Vision of the Promised Land**

It is important to note that King's vision of the Promised Land was an evolutionary ideal. It did not emerge out of an historical vacuum; rather it arose from a rich and vibrant tradition of protest of which he was its most noble heir. It began long before he was catapulted into national and international fame after the Montgomery bus boycott, long before he stood before the Lincoln Memorial and declared to a pilgrimage of thousands that America had written its citizens of color a bad check that had come back marked "insufficient funds." It began long before his campaigns for open public accommodations and voting rights, long before his outspoken stance

on an unjust war in Vietnam. His dream was born in the violent context of the Deep South where the inseparable twins of white racism and economic injustice had relegated Black people to the status of things, non-persons without names and destinies. The dream of community which sent him forth into the segregated south and into the teeming ghettos of the urban North was nurtured by a deep sense of mission and purpose that was the rich legacy of his enslaved forebearers and the long, torturous struggle of brave men and women who had come before him and who refused to believe that equality and decency were the special birthrights of sex, color and class.

Indeed, the vision of King was enriched by his intellectual odyssey through Morehouse College, the cloistered halls of Crozer Theological Seminary, Boston and Harvard Universities; but it was deepened by his discovery of the philosophy of civil disobedience articulated by Henry David Thoreau and the nonviolent method of Mahatma Gandhi.

On 17 May 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled unanimously in *Brown vs. Board of Education* that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The high court's ruling precipitated a climate of "interposition," "nullification," economic reprisals, and violence against black people led by White Citizens Councils and the Ku Klux Klan from Virginia to Texas.<sup>3</sup> In December of that same year, King became the spokesperson for the Montgomery Improvement Association, a position that placed him in the practical arena of social action where his developing understanding of the nature of community and the method for its actualization would be tested in the praxis of struggle. The able leadership of King as spokesman for the Montgomery Improvement Association, which came into being after Rosa Parks refused to relinquish her bus seat to a white man, ushered in a new era not only for the Montgomery black community, but for the continuing civil rights movement throughout the country. King felt that the movement in Montgomery was divinely inspired and that God was using Montgomery "as the proving ground for the struggle and triumph of freedom and justice in America."<sup>4</sup>

King's ministry in the Montgomery Movement was characterized by two significant realizations that became working hypotheses in his future campaigns to achieve the beloved community: his practical realization of the *method* of nonviolent resistance as the means to achieve his vision of community and the power of the federal government to combat the barriers to community imposed by segregated statutes and unjust laws.<sup>5</sup>

**Nonviolent Direct Action as the Method**

In Montgomery, King realized the power of nonviolent resistance to achieve his vision of community; the black church was the place which served as the source of its inspiration. Lerone Bennett contends that King's great achievement in reference to nonviolent resistance

was to turn the Negro's rooted faith in the church to social and political account by melding the image of Gandhi and the image of the Negro preacher and by overlaying all with Negro songs and symbols that bypassed cerebral centers and exploded in the well of the Negro psyche.<sup>6</sup>

Before Montgomery, his understanding of nonviolence was confined to an abstract association of ideas and readings from his intellectual pursuits, but in the midst of the struggle he came to understand its power to effect change, both in society and within the votary him/herself. It is also important to understand that nonviolent resistance as a viable alternative for social change had been debated and attempted by the black leadership long before King emerged as a proponent of the method.<sup>7</sup> Initially, the method of the movement which came to be called nonviolent resistance was conceived in the hearts of the black people of Montgomery as "Christian love." King writes that:

From the beginning a basic philosophy guided the movement.... It was the Sermon on the Mount rather than a doctrine of passive resistance that initially inspired the Negroes of Montgomery to dignified social action. It was Jesus of Nazareth that stirred the Negroes to protest with the creative weapon of love.<sup>8</sup>

The inspiration of Gandhi was to exert its influence through the letter of Miss Juliette Morgan to the Montgomery *Advertiser*, and later through the help of several Christian socialists and pacifists who collaborated with King as he fashioned a philosophy of nonviolence for the Montgomery Improvement Association.<sup>9</sup> He says:

Nonviolent resistance had emerged as the technique of the movement, while love stood out as the regulating ideal. In other words, Christ furnished the spirit and motivation, while Gandhi furnished the method.<sup>10</sup>

The philosophy of nonviolent resistance was disseminated in the mass meetings held in the black churches throughout the city. King felt that the black church was the natural place for this idea to be taught because of the long history of redemptive suffering that black

people had endured. After Montgomery, he believed that American Negroes had been chosen by history to become "instruments of a great idea," the idea of nonviolent resistance.<sup>11</sup>

### **Howard Washington Thurman and Mahatma Gandhi**

An important connection in the relationship between Gandhi and King is the Reverend Howard Thurman (1899-1981). Thurman's career as pastor, scholar, teacher, university chaplain, preacher; and administrator extended over fifty-five years and touched the lives of many highly visible leaders within and beyond the modern Civil Rights Movement.<sup>12</sup> Born in Daytona Beach, Florida at the turn of the century in the midst of the dehumanizing onslaughts of segregation and Jim Crow, Thurman committed himself to transforming parochial and dogmatic pockets of organized religion into a community transcending barriers of racism, classism, sexism, denominationalism, and religious exclusivism.

### **The India Delegation: A Pilgrimage of Friendship**

An epochal event in Howard Thurman's life was his participation in the Negro Delegation to India, Ceylon, and Burma in 1935 and 1936. Thurman served as chairman of the Delegation, and other members included Sue Bailey Thurman, the Rev. Edward G. Carroll,<sup>13</sup> and his wife Phenola Carroll.<sup>12</sup> The four members formed the "Pilgrimage of Friendship" to India, Ceylon, and Burma. They arrived in Colombo, Ceylon on 21 October 1935 and spent over four months in South Asia, delivering over 250 addresses before departing Ceylon on 8 March 1936. Much of the documentary evidence about the Delegation's journey, from its creation and planning through to its activities in South Asia, still survive.

The tour of the Negro Delegation highlighted a new urgency by the International Student Christian Movement of the need for international Christian enterprise to deal forthrightly with the issues of racism and colonialism. By the 1920s, there was a liberal Protestant critique of the missionary enterprise, which argued that the identification of the Christian message with the western and colonial powers was greatly reducing its scope.<sup>15</sup> The new emphasis on race within the Student Christian Movement was in part reflected by a new prominence of African Americans within the movement.

There had long been an interest by African Americans in India. By the mid-19th century, Frederick Douglass and other abolitionists railed against the practice of the "caste system" in the United States. African American Christians had been a presence in India at least since the 1880s, when the Fisk Jubilee Singers had an extensive Asian

concert tour. The prominent Methodist Episcopal missionary Amanda Berry Smith, born a slave in Maryland, spent several years in India on a successful preaching mission. In the twentieth century, the interest in India was greatly heightened by the rise of Mahatma Gandhi as the charismatic leader of India's independence effort.<sup>16</sup> In an account of her 1928 visit to India, Juliette Dericotte regretted her inability to arrange a meeting with Gandhi.<sup>17</sup> For his part, Gandhi published a special message "To the American Negro" in *The Crisis* in 1929, in which he was introduced by W.E.B. DuBois as "the greatest colored man in the world."<sup>18</sup> In Ralla Ram's talk at Spelman College, he told his audience that "Gandhi's outlook and plans for action are identical in tone and purpose with those set forth by Christ—so certainly alike that many think of him as a second corporate Christ, the living spirit of Christianity."<sup>19</sup>

### Meeting with Gandhi

In many ways the highlight on the tour of the Negro Delegation was the meeting with Mahatma Gandhi on 21 February 1936. The interview with Gandhi and the Delegation, published in Gandhi's English weekly *Harijan*<sup>20</sup> on 14 March 1936, has been reprinted in part several times, but never in its entirety.<sup>21</sup> Gandhi's campaigns against British colonial rule brought world-wide fame, and he was widely revered among African Americans as the most prominent non-white critic of imperialism and racism.<sup>22</sup> The meeting between Gandhi and the Negro Delegation had been anticipated since shortly after the announcement of the tour in early 1934. In October 1934, a close associate of Gandhi, Madeline Slade, spoke at Howard University in October 1934 at Thurman's invitation.<sup>23</sup> As Thurman recounted their conversation in his autobiography, she told Thurman, "you must see Gandhiji<sup>24</sup> while you are there" and she promised to help arrange an interview.<sup>25</sup> After her meeting with Thurman in January 1935, Muriel Lester, another close associate of Gandhi, also said she would contact Gandhi on his behalf. On 9 September 1935, Thurman wrote Gandhi directly, telling him of his meetings with Slade and Lester, and requesting a meeting. To Thurman's delight, there was a postcard from Gandhi waiting for him on his arrival in Ceylon, a month later, inviting the Delegation to meet with him.

According to a 1948 sermon Thurman delivered shortly after Gandhi's assassination, Gandhi had invited the Delegation to spend the Christmas holidays at his ashram in Wardha, but his illness prevented this, as it prevented the plan for them to meet in Delhi in February.<sup>26</sup> According to his autobiography, while in Bombay Thurman met a representative of Gandhi, and invited him to meet

with him at Bardoli.<sup>27</sup> If other arrangements proved impossible, Gandhi offered to come to Bombay to meet with the delegation. Thurman promptly cancelled all scheduled appearances and Thurman, Sue Bailey Thurman, and Edward Carroll (Phenola Carroll was still recovering from scarlet fever), left to meet Gandhi. After a train trip of three hours, they arrived at Navsari Station at about four o'clock a.m. on February 21<sup>st</sup>, where Desai met them. They went to a mango grove, and while Sue Bailey Thurman and Edward Carroll rested in a bungalow, Thurman and Desai spoke of Gandhi. At daybreak, they traveled the 20 miles to Bardoli.

Gandhi met the Delegation with great warmth. Thurman related in his memoirs that "to my amazement, the first thing Gandhi did was to reach under his shawl and take out an old watch, saying, 'I apologize, but we must talk by the watch, because we have much to talk about and you have only three hours before you have to leave to take your train back to Bombay.'<sup>28</sup> One possible reason for Gandhi's excitement was this was his first meeting with prominent African Americans, after many years of his interest in the civil rights struggles in the United States. Thurman recounts in his memoirs that never in his life had he been examined in such a persistent fashion about the history and current realities of African Americans. Gandhi wanted to know, according to Thurman, "about voting rights, lynching, discrimination, public school education, the churches and how they functioned. His questions covered the entire sweep of our experience in American society."<sup>29</sup> The delegation also asked a number of questions, with Sue Bailey Thurman asking many of the most probing questions.

The meeting of the Negro Delegation with Gandhi was extensively covered in the black press in the United States, and the interview became fairly well known in America.<sup>30</sup> The news of the interview traveled fast. Gandhi's final comment to Thurman in "With Our Negro Guests," that "it may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world," took on a life of its own, and soon became a watchword in the civil rights movement, remembered and quoted at critical times.<sup>31</sup>

King was a product of this tradition and it is within this context that we best understand him and the nature and significance of his vision for us. It would be a fatal error to simply understand King as an isolated genius who created out of nothingness the powerful vision of universal peoplehood. Much to the contrary, if we are going to really do justice to this twentieth century American prophet, we must forever keep in mind that the dream which he lived and died for is not the unique property of any individual, race, or nationality; rather

it is the ongoing story of dispossessed and disinherited people of every color and every clan on this globe who have had to deal with the madness of Western supremacy.

Near the end of his life, the dream of King went beyond the crusade for civil rights and entered into the arena of human rights. His vision of justice and freedom had evolved from a national to an international perspective. His insistence that the triplets of oppression (racism, poverty, and war) were the inevitable products of the violence, which possess this nation, levied a high cost on his stature as a national leader. It cost him dearly. The "American Dream" that he talked about in 1963 had become the "American Nightmare" for him by 1968. The F.B.I. labeled him as the most dangerous political threat to the government. The later King, of 1966 to 1968—contrary to some misinformed commentators—was not a "moderate" but a radical visionary who called for the reconstruction of American society. Shortly before his death he had laid plans to stage a campaign of massive civil disobedience in the nation's capitol that would demand that the government respond to the overwhelming needs of poor people of all races and clans in this country. His was the first "rainbow coalition." This dream cost him dearly. He paid with his life.

### **Where Do We Go From Here?**

This understanding of the radical nature of the dreams of Dr. King and Mahatma Gandhi will make some people uneasy, especially those who are content to see "business as usual." As the United States is knee deep in a costly war in Iraq, feverishly negotiating a way out of a potential holocaust in North and South Korea, witnessing the remarkable economic growth of China and India with its concomitant challenges of poverty, illiteracy, and class divisions, and agonizingly monitoring the ongoing crisis between Israel and Palestine, the vision of the beloved community of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the world of peace and justice envisioned by Gandhi, are no longer the distant imaginings of Utopian dreamers, but may be the only viable option for peaceful co-existence on this planet. Today citizens of the world are asking whether this dream of nonviolence and peace has a chance. But if we are to be true to their vision, if we really believe that negotiation and peaceful resolution are better options than war, then it is important that we understand that their dream is not one for sentimentalists and "pop patriots." It is not an isolated episode in the chronicles of history; rather it is the continuing struggle against religious xenophobia, racism, economic injustice, war and all forms of oppression that eat away at the heart of our world like an insidious

cancer. It is a call for "new beginnings." It is a call for a new vanguard of visionaries who are willing to go into the "no-trespassing zones" of this world system and to declare boldly and courageously that the future of our communities, our nation, and indeed the world, hinge on moral foundations. To accept the radical implications of their dream means that we can no longer feign ignorance and invisibility in regard to the political and economic scenarios that determine our corporate destiny.

A new world is being born—as Thomas Friedman suggests, "The world is flat."<sup>32</sup> All around us there is evidence that a changing of the guard is taking place. Throughout the world—in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Central and South America, in Southeast Asia, in the former Soviet states of Eastern Europe, and within the context of American society significant changes are taking place that are having far-reaching effects on the way we do business. Business cannot go on as usual. We must make new beginnings.

### **Interconnecting and Interrelating with Other Cultures**

Where do we begin? First, we must develop new and better ways of seeing and responding to the interrelatedness and the interconnectedness of world cultures. This means that we can no longer see ourselves as solitary actors in a world populated by other peoples whose histories, industries, and life circumstances are intimately connected to our own. We have learned the tragic lesson that what happens in Afghanistan affects what takes place in New York City and Delhi. Being the world's only real superpower brings with it extraordinary capacity to create or destroy fragile relationships with other nations and cultures. While national self-interest is the legitimate prerogative of any nation, we run the risk of forfeiting that right through aggression and dominance by military and economic cooptation, what former Dean of the Kennedy School at Harvard University, Joseph Nye, calls, "hard power." We need rather to learn the art of "soft power," i.e., through attraction, influence, and negotiation we appeal to the highest in others' cultures, political values, and foreign policies that are legitimate and have moral authority. "Soft power," is a more reasonable and potentially productive course of action because it requires that we learn to listen deeply to the unpopular voices in our societies that seek diverse ways of understanding. "Soft power," allows us to connect in places of strategic interest.<sup>33</sup> Building world consensus and partnering with those unlikely global neighbors who have criticized our arrogance and avarice in the past is sometimes hard to do, but we must give peace a chance. So much weighs on our willingness to find peaceful



ways to violent situations. Right now as we gather to commemorate the legacy of our nations' greatest peacemakers, we have sent thousands of young men and women to fight a nation that most Americans could not locate on a map of the world. Like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., we need to return to "soft power," the ability to shape others' preferences through nonviolent action.

### Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

Secondly, we must think globally and act locally. We must become "glocal" i.e., learning to see how global policies and actions impact local environments. Leadership, at its best, seeks first to understand its environment and what are the critical issues at stake. The primary questions are always, "What is going on?" "How do I understand what is going on?" "Who makes the rules?" "Who enforces the rules?" Both Gandhi's and King's greatest contributions were perhaps their way of thinking globally and acting locally. Their bold excoriation of war was based on the ways in which they saw the interrelation of poverty, war, and race. We must learn to ask therefore "What is going on?" "How do I understand what is going on?" "Who makes the rules?" "Who enforces the rules?"

Gandhi and King also had a lot to say about what they perceived as the challenges that history has placed upon us. Both believed that there would need to be a reckoning with Western imperialism's own presuppositions about power. Like Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us, before his tragic death in 1968, that we no longer live in a small house, but rather we have inherited a world house of inter-relatedness and inter-dependability. He suggested in clear and strident language that we must learn to live together as brothers and sisters or die apart as fools. During his later years, King was acutely aware of the need for a broader interpretive framework for understanding what he perceived as a crucial passage in history. He further suggested that the struggles of African Americans must be understood in the light of a "shifting" of the West's basic outlooks and philosophical presuppositions about "power". King argued that indeed

We have inherited a large house, a great 'world house' in which we have to live together — black and white, Easterner and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu — a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, must learn somehow to live together with each other in peace. However deeply American Negroes are caught in the struggle to be at last home in our homeland of the United States, we cannot ignore

the larger world house in which we are also dwellers. Equality with whites will not solve the problems of either whites or Negroes if it means equality in a world society stricken by poverty and in a universe doomed to extinction by war.<sup>34</sup>

### **Where Are We Now?**

Much has changed since Gandhi's and King's prophetic statements about violence, and yet so much remains the same. They strongly believed that there must be a revolution of values and priorities if we were to make the shift necessitated by global connectedness. As we witness the shifting grounds of global change, we must ask what does this new season of worldwide struggle mean for us? Can we all get along? Dare we hope or must we conclude with those who say that we are at "the end of history."

### **A Call to Courage and Hope**

There is a story told by Olive Schreiner, the South African writer, about an old mother duck who had for years led her ducklings to the same pond. Finally, one day she led a new batch of ducklings to the old pond and it was all dried up and nothing was left but baked mud. Still she persisted in bringing her younglings down to it and walked about flapping her wings with an anxious quack, trying to induce them to enter. But the young ducklings, with fresh young instincts, could hear far-off the delicious drippings from the new dam which was built up higher to catch the water. When they smelled the chickweed and the long grass that was growing up beside the dam, the young ducklings absolutely refused to disport themselves on the baked mud and to pretend. And so they set out for new pastures—perhaps to lose themselves on the way or perhaps to find themselves?

"To the old mother duck," Schreiner writes, "one is inclined to say, 'Ah, good old mother duck, can you not see that the world has changed? You cannot bring water back into the dried up pond! Perhaps it was better and more pleasant when it was there, but it has gone forever; and, would you and yours swim again, it must be in other waters.'"

Brothers and sisters, we must begin again—let us begin again. We must give our nation, our cities, and communities a new dream! A dream that is fashioned out of the best insights of the past and our most critical and informed analyses of the present. We must not be content simply with the legacy of the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, but we must hold their vision in a creative,

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dialectical tension with the world in which we live and refine it in the crucible of struggle. We must not be satisfied with abstract conversations about how it was or used to be or even how it ought to be. The dreams that we dream, the visions that we see, must always be tested in concrete, historical engagement against the barriers that impede the realization of human community. The future of our communities, our nation and the world depends on a new generation of men and women who dare to dream creatively and to call forth new realities based on those dreams.

### **Heirs of the Dream**

We are the heirs of the vision of Gandhi and King. It is a dream that continues and no one can claim it as their own until they are willing "to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before their God." We must not be afraid to get in the water for fear of drowning. We cannot sail to the land of freedom without setting sail. The vision of a peaceful, nonviolent world is not a dream for cravens and cowards who hide behind false justifications for nonaction. It is not for spectators who stand on the sidelines and watch injustice and exploitation at a distance. It is not for those vain religionists who bury their heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich and pretend that everything will be all right anyway. For when we bury our heads in the sand, we always leave more exposed than is hidden. It is not for greedy and insane puppeteers who hide behind the curtains of social fiction and manipulate the mindscape. It is not for sentimentalists and vain practitioners of religious ideologies that work against community in the name of a justice that leaves the whole world toothless and blind. It is a dream for those who are willing to join the ranks of men and women who are so inspired by the moral order of the universe and the sacredness of human personality that they are willing to make a track to the water's edge and to lay their bodies down as a bridge for future generations to travel over into the land of freedom. It is a dream for women and men who are willing to stand alone when the crowds disperse, who will keep on moving against all odds; who will refuse to cling to falsehoods and lies that contradict reality; who believe that truth has the final word in this universe, and that truth and love will endure forever.

This is the Gandhi King vision. A dream born out of a zeal for justice, nurtured in the praxis of struggle, refined in the fires of persecution, strengthened by the arms of faith, propelled by the vision of hope, enriched by the power of love, and set free by the truth that no lie can endure forever. We are their heirs. We are the ones to whom they have passed the torch. We are the dreamers who

must make this world a better place. We are the ones who must continue their dream.

Dream on, dreamers! Dream in season and out of season. Dream in the valley and climb to the mountain and see the Promised Land! See new and greater visions of the New Reality that is coming into the world! See a new heaven and a new earth! See a new kind of people rising out of the dungeons of hopelessness and powerlessness who dare to name their worlds! See the rejected and dejected who sit in the shadows of darkness come forth as bearers of light and hope! See the humiliated and emaciated rise up on wings like eagles, see them run and not get weary, see them walk and not faint! See the land of freedom and harmony for the peoples of the earth! See what the prophets saw! See what the King saw!

If your vision is rooted in justice and truth, there is no power on earth that can nullify its mandate. Politics can't legislate it, poverty can't define it, racism can't destroy it, sexism can't vanquish it, water can't drown it, fire can't consume it, death can't kill it, hell can't hold it, greedy and insane men can't prevent it—for it lives in the mind of God who has said, "Yes!" And when God says, "Yes!" no power in the universe can say "No." Begin again! Hope again! Struggle again! There is a great camp meeting in the Promised Land!

### Notes and References

1. Martin Luther King Jr. *Stride Towards Freedom: The Montgomery story* (New York, Harper and Row, 1958), p. 66.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.
3. See Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Making of America* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), pp. 239-50. In Montgomery, the State Board of Education voted unanimously to continue segregated facilities through the 1954-55 school year. Gates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, p. 51.
4. King, "Annual Address to the Montgomery Improvement Association," Holt Street Baptist Church, 3 December 1956. King Archives, Atlanta, GA; King, *Stride*, p. 51; Gates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, p. 73.
5. See King, "Annual Address to the Montgomery Improvement Association," December 3, 1956.
6. See Lerone Bennett, "When the Man and the Hour Are Met." C. Eric Lincoln, ed., *Martin Luther King, Jr.: A Profile* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1970), p. 25.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-29.
8. King, *op. cit.*

9. Ibid., pp. 66-67; Gates, *Let the Trumpet Sound*, pp. 77-80. See also Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King Jr.*, (Athens and London, The University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp. 23-35.
10. King, *Stride*, op. cit., p. 67.
11. Ibid., p. 200; King, "The Negro and the American Dream," Address at the Public Meeting of Charlotte, NC, NAACP, 25 September 1960. p. 3.
12. The "modern Civil Rights Movement" refers to the designation offered by Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984). Morris dates the movement from June 1953, the date of the Baton Rouge protest against the city's segregated bus system. The significance of the Baton Rouge movement, for Morris, lies in its impact upon the strategic maneuvers of African Americans "directly involved in economic boycotts, street marches, mass meetings, going to jail by the thousands, and a whole range of disruptive tactics commonly referred to as nonviolent direct action." (ix) This confrontation marks a significant moment in a long tradition of protest by masses of African Americans predating the Civil War. See John Hope Franklin, "The Forerunners," *American Visions* 1:1 (January/February, 1986):26-35 and Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King*, Tr. (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), pp. 11-35.
13. Edward G[onzalez]Carroll (1910-2000) was born in Wheeling, West Virginia. He earned the A.B. from Morgan College [Morgn State University] (1930); B.D. from Yale University (1933); and M.A. from Columbia University (1941). At the time of the India Delegation planning, he was Pastor of John Wesley Methodist Church in Salem, Virginia (1934-35). In 1935, he was ordained an elder in the former Methodist Church, and from 1936-1937, he was Pastor of the Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia (1936-37). He was an instructor in Bible and Philosophy at Morgan College (1937-41); a U.S. Army chaplain (1941-45); and Associate Student Secretary of the YMCA in New York City (1945-49). From 1949-1953, he served as Associate Pastor of St. Marks Methodist Church in New York City, and was Pastor of Epworth Methodist Church in New York City (1953-55). From 1955-1962, he was Pastor of Sharp Street Memorial Methodist church in Baltimore. In 1972, he was elected a bishop by the Methodist Church's Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference and served the Boston Area until his retirement in 1980.
14. Phenola V[alentine] Carroll (1912-1999) was born in Frederick, Maryland and received her B.A. from Morgan College (1933). She served as an analyst for the War Department during World War II, a caseworker for the Department of Welfare in New York City and a social worker for the Baltimore Housing Department.

15. An influential work in this vein was Daniel Johnson Fleming's *Whither Bound in Missions?* (New York: Association Press, 1925). Fleming, who taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, argued the missionary effort needed a greater sensitivity to foreign cultures and a de-emphasis on evangelical conversions. Fleming had been a missionary in India for 12 years and quoted an Indian statesman as stating, "your Jesus is hopelessly handicapped by His connection to the West." See William R. Hutchinson, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 1987), 150.
16. For African American interest in Gandhi, see Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African American Encounter with Gandhi* (1992) (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).
17. Juliette Derricotte, "The Student Conference at Mysore, India," in *The Crisis* 36 (August 1929), 267, 280-82.
18. M.K. Gandhi, "To the American Negro, A Message from Mahatma Gandhi," *Cn'sz's* 36 (July 1929), 225.
19. "A Great Christian from India," *Spelman Messenger* (48) October 1931, 24-25.
20. *Harijan* was an English language weekly published from 1933 to 1956 by the Harijan Sevak Sangh, a society founded by Gandhi to help untouchables (published in Poona in the period 1935-1936). "Harijan," was Gandhi's term, meaning "Children of God" in Sanskrit, for the untouchables.
21. For earlier published versions of the interview see M.K. Gandhi, *Non-Violence in Peace and War* (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan, 1948), vol I, 131-134; D.G. Tenduklar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, (Dehli, India: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1960), vol VI, 48-51; Homer A. Jack, ed, *The Gandhi Reader: A Source Book of his Life and Writings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956), 313-16; Elizabeth Yates, *Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer* (1964).
22. For Gandhi's influence on African American thought see Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up a Prophet: The African American Encounter with Gandhi* (1992).
23. Sudarshan Kapur, op.cit., p. 83-85; Thurman, *With Head and Heart*, pp. 105-107.
24. Ji, from the Hindi, a mark of respect, usually added to a name.
25. Kapur, op.cit., p. 83-85; Thurman, op.cit., pp. 105-107.
26. Thurman, "Gandhi," January 1948, published in Volume II. The letter of Mahdev Desai to HT, 26 Jan 1936, published in this volume, also speaks of Gandhi's plans to meet the Delegation in Delhi. In addition to the illness of Gandhi, the Delegation, due to "illness and overwork," cancelled their public appearances in Delhi for several days. See "Detailed Schedule." In his autobiography, Thurman implies, inaccurately, that there had been very little contact between Thurman and Gandhi in South Asia until the Delegation

- arrived in Bombay, Thurman, op.cit., pp. 130-131.
27. Bardoli, a small town near Bombay, was the site of an experiment in Satyagraha of total non-cooperation with the British authorities from 1921 to 1922, and again in 1928. The Congress Party had an encampment or ashram in Bardoli which Gandhi frequently used; Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (Harper & Brothers: New York, 1950), 197-199, 253-256. Bardoli was in a native state, Dharampur [now in Gujarat] which in the mid-1930s had an area of about 800 square miles, and a population of about 112,000. Like other native Indian states, Dharampur was controlled by a prince and had some powers of self-rule, *Indian Year Book, 1935-36* (Bombay and Calcutta: Bennett, Coleman: 1935), 200-201; CB. Dalai, *Gandhi: 1915-1948, A Detailed Chronology* (New Dehli: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1971), 115.
28. Thurman, op.cit., p. 132. In the article the length of the interview is given as two hours.
29. Ibid.
30. Kapur, p. 91-93, 186.\
31. One of the most poignant appearances of the quotation, with a mention of Thurman's meeting with Gandhi, is in an article by Bayard Rustin, in which he recounts a conversation he had with Martin Luther King Jr shortly after the two men helped found the organization that would become the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, "Even in the Face of Death," in *Down the Line: The Collected Writings of Bayard Rustin* (Quadrangle Books: Chicago, 1971), 103. Originally published in *Liberation*, February 1957.
32. Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005).
33. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Succeed in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).
34. Ibid., p. 167.

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delighted Gandhi. Gandhi came in close contact with Gokhale whom he considered his *Guru*. It was Gokhale who encouraged him to stay in India and also brought him to the Lucknow session of the Congress in 1916.

It is one of the big questions in history whether it was the people of Champaran who made him the leader of the nation or Gandhi himself emerged as a leader of the nation in his own right as a crusader against British imperialism. A close scrutiny of the books, articles and records on Champaran Satyagraha indicates that it was the people, particularly the peasantry or *kisans* who made him their leader. Though "Vakil Babu," Brij Kishore Prasad, Gorakh Babu, Rajendra Babu, Mazharul Haq, J.B. Kripalani and Ramnaumi Babu have had a positive role in associating themselves with Gandhi in Champaran, Rajkumar Shukla, a peasant played a significant role in popularising the miracle of Gandhi in people's imagination. Shukla was himself an affluent peasant before 1917 but he was reduced into a simple kisan when the movement was started. He had 60 cows and enough cash to lend money, but by 1917 he was small-time agriculturists. It was Shukla who brought Braj Kishore Babu to Gandhi's tent in Lucknow.<sup>4</sup> Shukla virtually hauled Gandhi from Lucknow-Kanpur-Calcutta-Patna-Muzaffarpur and Champaran. Gandhi has written that Shukla was 'ignorant, unsophisticated but resolute agriculturist.' In Patna (1917) Gandhi found that Shukla, had no knowledge of how to reach Muzaffarpur and Motihari from Patna. It was Mazhrul Haq who showed him the way. Gandhi writes that Shukla was 'perfectly innocent of everything, although what he narrated to Gandhi about the indigo-growing tenants of Champaran was insightful. It was testified by Ramnavmi Babu in Muzaffarpur. The whole narrative regarding the attitude of middle class in general and particularly the Vakils (lawyers) was no doubt sympathetic to the tenants of Champaran. But the limitation of the English-speaking middle class professionals was in sharp contrast to Shukla's perception. Direct action was required to be taken by the leaders, but somehow it did not materialise. Possibly, without Gandhi's desire and Shukla's insistence, they would not have gone to Champaran to see with their own eyes the actual condition of the peasantry. Obviously the gulf between the lawyers as a class and the peasantry existed. Gandhi wrote that "the figures of the fees they (lawyers) charged in Bengal and Bihar staggered him. Gandhi decided to stay in Motihari to make an inquiry into the affairs of *raiyyats* for months together instead of two days as planned earlier. He was in need of a lawyer's assistance, but he found Braj Kishore Babu exceptionally cool-headed. The nature of assistance (translation and interpretation) without any fees was explained to Brij Kishore Babu



by Gandhi. Brij Kishore Babu explained the limitations of Vakil's capacity and their sacrifice. Gandhi had already told them (lawyers) the necessity to face imprisonment. The idea of preparing oneself for imprisonment was a novel thing for them. This explains the limitation of the middle class.

The colonial authority did not allow Gandhi to make an inquiry into the affairs of the indigo plantation. He was ready to resist any threat from them. He received a summons to take his trial the next day for disobeying the order to leave Champaran. He kept awake the whole night writing letters and giving necessary instructions to Brij Kishore Babu. But the news of the notice and the summons were spread by Shukla the same night. It spread like wild fire among the peasantry of Motihari. The Congress was not known to the people; nor did Gandhi desire that the Congress should be involved. It was considered by the planters as a 'synonym for lawyers.' Even Shukla had limitations to reach the vast mass of peasantry. But the peasantry received Gandhi as Lord Rama to kill the British Ravana (planters). They became so intimate to Gandhi as if they were age-old friends. Thousands of peasants from in and around Motihari (in some record ten thousand) reached the Motihari court well before Gandhi reached there. In his meeting with the peasantry he was "face to face with God, Ahimsa and Truth." Gandhi wrote that "that day in Champaran was an unforgettable event in my life and a red letter day for the peasants and for me."<sup>5</sup> It was because of the presence of the peasants the government was put on its trial and not Gandhi. The case was withdrawn and the Magistrate wrote that instead of arresting Gandhi he was under the arrest by the people of Champaran. This explains Gandhi's popularity with the peasantry.

Against the divisive policy to divide the Indian communities on religious lines, which was encouraged and engineered by the colonial masters, the Lucknow Pact (1916) and the Non-cooperation Movement (1920-22) were important steps in countering this strategy of division. The thirty sixth session of the Indian National Congress held in Nagpur in 1920 not only took up the question of Khilafat, but spelt out non-cooperation in terms of a boycott of foreign goods and desertion of government schools, colleges and courts by the students, teachers and pleaders respectively. No-tax campaign, peasants' movements, labour strikes, and fight for economic independence, and reform of Hinduism in the matter of its treatment of suppressed castes were other major endeavours which accompanied the struggle for Hindu-Muslim unity. Though theoretically the Non-cooperation movement was non-violent, it turned violent at many places on the basis of religious faith. Though it was suspended on the ground of

encouraging violence, it once again united the people of India in a manner that can be compared with the unity of both the communities manifested in the revolt of 1857. In both the events religious beliefs had a positive role to play against British imperialism. Here again, the people of Bihar followed the preachings of Gandhi both in spirit and action.

Gandhi was convinced of the rationale of the Muslims' case on Khilafat. He stated that he was bound as an Indian to share the sufferings and trials of fellow-Indians. He sincerely saw the Mohammadans to be his brothers and therefore it was his duty to help them in their hour of trial.<sup>6</sup> When he was invited by the Viceroy along with various leaders to attend the War Conference in Delhi, he objected to taking part in it because of the exclusion from it of leaders like Ali Brothers (Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali) who were advocates of Khilafat. They were then in the Betul and Chindwara Jails. In fact, he was eager to understand the Muslim mind through contact with the purest and most patriotic Muslim representatives. He never hesitated to go whenever they took him in order to get into intimate touch with them.<sup>7</sup>

He knew in South Africa itself that there were many obstacles to friendship between the Hindus and the Muslims. He, therefore, never missed a single opportunity to remove such obstacles. His long South African experience convinced him that it would be on the question of Hindu-Muslim unity that his *ahimsa* would be put to its severest test. He even applied for permission to visit the Ali Brothers in Betul Jail, but it was not granted. It was after the imprisonment of Ali Brothers that he was invited by Muslim friends to attend the Session of the Muslim League in Calcutta. He addressed them and asked the Muslims to secure their release. He was taken by Muslim friends to the Muslim College at Aligarh where he asked young men to be *fakirs* for the service of the motherland.<sup>8</sup>

Having been convinced of the need for genuine friendship with the Muslims for the cause of the nation, he opened correspondence with the Government for the release of the Ali Brothers. After discussing with Muslim friends and studying the views and attitude of the Ali Brothers about the Khilafat, Gandhi felt that if he had to become a true friend of the Muslims, he must render all possible help in securing the release of the Ali Brothers.<sup>9</sup> He felt that in matters of religious beliefs each one had to decide for himself. He, therefore, felt it necessary to take up the question of Khilafat. He asked his Majesty's ministers to give definite assurance about protecting the Muslims states. He knew that every Muslim was interested in safeguarding the interest of the Turkish empire. In the letter to the

Viceroy he expressed concern about the rights of Muslim states and the Muslim sentiments on their great sacred places (Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem). He even warned him that the safety of the British depended on respecting the sentiments of the Muslims.

In regard to Hindu-Muslim unity, Gandhi said that the union that he wanted was not a patched up thing but a union of hearts based upon recognition of Hindu-Muslim unity. He did not find anything in the *Quran* or in Hinduism which treated both the communities as natural enemies. He argued that it was fanatical priests in both religions who have set one against the other.<sup>10</sup>

He said that true beauty on Hindu-Muslim unity lay in each remaining true to his own religion and yet being true to each other.<sup>11</sup> For strengthening the Hindu-Muslim unity it was essential that one must have common purpose, common goal and common sorrow. Gandhi's ideals of Hindu-Muslim unity were seriously implemented in Bihar.

On the basis of such principles Gandhi was able to secure the success that the Non-cooperation Movement attained. The Indian National Congress recorded its warm appreciation of the adoption by Muslim League of the ideal of self-government for India within the British empire. It expressed its complete accord with the belief which the League had so emphatically declared at its last session that the political future of the country depended on the harmonious working and cooperation of the various communities in the country which had been the cherished ideal of the Congress. The Congress most heartily welcomed the hope expressed by the League that the leaders of different communities would make every endeavour to find a modus operandi for a joint and concerted action on all questions of national good (28th Session of INC, Karachi, 1913).

In order to achieve a larger goal and in particular, the defence of Turkey, the Central Khilafat Committee in its meeting held in Allahabad supported the Congress sponsored Non-cooperation movement. In a letter signed by ninety Muslims and addressed to the Viceroy (22 June 1920) they expressed concern about the Allies' Turkish peace terms and considered them to be in direct violation of the religious sentiments of the Muslims. While praying for a revision of peace terms, they warned the Viceroy that if he failed to do so they will make "Common cause with the people of India."<sup>12</sup> To strengthen the unity of both the communities they threatened that they would withdraw cooperation from the government and would ask their co-religious and Hindu brethren to do likewise.

Such resolutions and declarations by both the Congress and the Khilafat committee did not remain confined to mere words. These

were, in fact, put into effect throughout the country. In a speech delivered by Gandhi at Jharia (now in Jharkhand) he said that the Hindus and Muslims were one and they should not distrust one another. They should not think that if Swaraj was attained there would be disunity among them. He said that Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali were like his brothers. They were Muslims. And yet he (Gandhi) a devout Hindu, considered them as his brothers. He strongly felt that "if the Hindus gave up their lives to save Khilafat from danger, it would be in the best interests of the country."<sup>13</sup>

While delivering a speech at the National College, Patna on 6 February 1921, Mazharul Haque said that the greatest thing which the Mahatma had done was that he had brought about the unity of the Hindus and the Muslims<sup>14</sup> because he knew that in unity lay the freedom of India. He was certain that all the peoples of Bihar were with Gandhi and if the Mahatma jumped into the fire, they would follow him. Narrating the qualities of the Mahatma, Mazharul Haque said that they should be friendly with the Muslims as sons of the same mother.<sup>15</sup> He felt that once such brotherly relationships began to be practised it would become possible to take the cause of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs to the people of the country.

Though the Police constituted an important symbol of British authority and power, in many places in Bihar the subordinate policemen went on strikes demanding better service conditions. The police were more organised by January 1921 and began communications with each other both within and outside their districts.<sup>16</sup> The first organised meeting of constables were held in Patna, Chapra, and Arrah. In Patna the meeting was held at Diara which was attended by 400 constables. Similar meetings of head constables were held in Gaya. The constables of Patna, Purnea, Monghyr and Champaran went on strike on 5 March 1921. They deposited their kits and thus the movements had provided an important context for furthering the police protest. The Police and non-cooperators were in constant touch with each other and the latter were helping their agitation and encouraging them to resign and join the national movement. Both the police superintendents of Darbhanga and Purnea reported that in the background of the agitation stood the non-cooperators.<sup>17</sup> A large number of leaflets were distributed by the non-cooperators among the policemen with a request to them in the name of religion not to commit atrocities on their own countrymen. One of the leaflets contained "O Sipahi, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Jainism – all religions forbid killing of live beings."<sup>18</sup> Many Muslim constables also resigned their jobs saying that their religious convictions debarred them from serving the

government. They said that to serve in the police was *haram*.<sup>19</sup> In December 1921, 200 men invaded the Sonbavsa *thana* in the then Muzaffarpur district (now in Sitamarhi district) and asked the police to quit government service because their remaining in job was tantamount to Hindus eating beef and Muslims eating pork. Such protests by the policemen for a common cause were not based on mere religious faith, since the police force in Bihar consisted largely of the *Chhatris* (Rajputs) and Brahmins as well as Muslims. This kind of unity between different castes and communities was a result of the goals pronounced by Gandhi.

In spite of counter propaganda by the government against the movement and rumour spread by mischief makers against Gandhi regarding his vegetarianism and cow protection movement, the movement did not come to a halt. In the name of Gandhi, meat and fish were forcibly taken away from people by overzealous vegetarians. Though Gandhi was a staunch vegetarian, he "freely associated (himself) with meat."<sup>20</sup> He said that the vegetarian Hindus must compel other Hindus to abstain from fish, flesh or fowl. Non-cooperators would make a serious mistake, if they sought to convert people to their creed by violence.<sup>21</sup> As regards cow protection, he said that "to wrest cow from the hands of the Muslims was not Hindu-like." He quoted the *Gita* and that in the *Gita* religion did not consist in using force. "Both the *Ramayana* and the *Gita* pointed to that very conclusion."<sup>22</sup>

Thus, despite different religions, the people of India came to be united almost as one party, one religion and one nation against alien rule under the leadership of the Mahatma. Such unity proved to be a testing ground, where for the first time after the revolt of 1857 they fought effectively together for freedom. The struggle for freedom assumed national character. Unity of the religious faiths drew the attention of the millions of poor peasants and workers for asserting their rights and the Congress party emerged as the chief spokesman of the whole country. National movement henceforth became popular and the struggle for freedom spread to the villages for the first time. The movement awakened strong feelings of nationalism and patriotism among the Indian people. Non-Cooperation served as a baptism of fire which initiated the people to a new faith and new hope and inspired them with a new confidence in their power to fight for freedom.

Since the main thrust of the paper is to discuss the people's perception of Gandhi, it is necessary that some details should be given. Gandhi visited the district of Gorakhpur in eastern UP on 8 February 1921. He addressed a mammoth meeting estimated to have

been attended by 1 lakh and 2.5 lakh,<sup>23</sup> although he did not stay in Gorakhpur like Champaran and Kheda. It is not an attribute of his charisma but it shows how he was registered in popular consciousness. Most of his power/glory was reported in the local press between February-May 1921. It is also indicative of the fact that the success of Champaran Satyagraha on the issue faced by the poor and middle class peasantry had caught the imagination of the people. A passage titled 'Boundless Love' from his tour diary<sup>24</sup> is a representative of how peasant attitudes towards Gandhi have been written in the nationalist narratives. It was impossible to put in words the exuberance of love which Gandhi and Shaikat Ali experienced in Bihar. The train on the B.N.W. Railway line was stopped at all the stations and there was not a single station which was not crowded with hundreds of people at that time. Even women did not fail to present themselves so that they could see and hear him. A huge concourse of the students were found everywhere. At some places sisters took off their necklaces and presented them to Gandhi. The *Sanyasi* was not far behind in his sacrifice. Gandhi's *darshan* by the people was also murmured. In some places there was a slogan *Gandhi-Shaukat Ali Ki Jai*. Even policemen started saluting Gandhi. Remarkable scenes were witnessed. In a Bihar village when Gandhi and his party were stranded in the train, an old woman came seeking out Gandhi. She was 104 years old, her eyes had grown dim. She had visited many places and dedicated two temples. She said that just like we have had Rama and Krishna as *avtaras* so also Mahatma Gandhi had appeared as an *avatar*. This simple faith moved India's millions who greeted him everywhere with the cry, '*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*.' Even prostitutes of Barisal, the marwari merchants of Calcutta, Oriya coolies, railway strikers, and the santals presented *Khadi Chaddar*. Jacques Pouchepadass testified to this kind of image in Champaran.<sup>25</sup>

Even a communist family addressed M.K. Gandhi as 'Gandhiji.' The kids were asked by their parents to call him 'Mahatma.'<sup>26</sup> This does not mean that the Communists were not critical of him. Gandhiji was admired because of his total dominance of the national movement. R.P. Dutt's (*India Today*) called him "mascot of bourgeoisie" 'that general of unbroken disasters.' But even R.P. Dutt gave him recognition. He admits that Gandhi alone could enter the house and hearts of the Indian poor, where the Indian bourgeoisie could never gain entrance. Dutt, however, does not explain how and why Gandhi has had access to the poor people of India. The subalterns are so satisfied with their theology that Gandhi is not very important to them, although they have changed their position in assessing Gandhi and the national movement in recent years. The imperialist historians,

or British Government officials during the colonial and post-colonial era have always tried to argue that Gandhi was a Mahatma from the outside and that he was a clever politician, a master manipulator. The nationalist appeal did not acquire any popular support till the election of 1937, because it was the Government of India Act 1935 rather than Gandhi and other nationalist mobilization which gave Indian politicians the necessary impetus to reach out to the Indian masses. Forgetting how many lives were lost at the call of Mahatma, Judith Brown has branded them as Gandhi's 'sub-contractors' or 'intermediaries.' It is high time that we should try to understand the positive aspects of national movements by studying in depth Gandhi and his strategy, programme, action and particularly his ideas about composite culture and religions.

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# Gandhi, Hindustani, Nationalist Movement and Linguistic Unity

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## Abstract

THIS ARTICLE CRITICALLY examines Gandhi's espousal of the cause of Hindi/Hindustani during the nationalist movement and seeks to evaluate his stand on the language issue in the context of the changes that took place in the post-colonial and post-reform eras. It is found that Hindustani, which could not progress due to the communal orientation, succeeded in forging religious unity and involving the masses in the freedom struggle. The article argues that despite the wide spread apprehensions about the disintegrating character of the linguistic states; the states reorganization has not weakened the federal polity in the least. The article concludes that Hindi is unlikely to usurp the strong position of English in light of the latter's ubiquitous global presence.

Scholarly interest in Gandhi and everything by which he stood and opposed has remained undiminished, continuously igniting ideas and invigorating new areas of study that concern the anti-colonial struggle which was synonymous with Gandhi and his life. More than any other historical figure in India, with the possible exception of the Buddha, Gandhi has been studied, researched, criticized and at times uncharitably lampooned even long after his death. Notwithstanding the availability of rich corpus of information and critical work on his achievements and of course failures, there still remain areas, with

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some of which his arduous engagement is to be rediscovered and reexamined. Eradication of untouchability, promotion of Khadi and restoring and preserving communal harmony are the most widely known areas of the community building work by Gandhi. His life-long mission of bringing about communal harmony was marked by the adoption of social action methods, especially sensitization and pedagogic exercises that involved campaign, advocacy and occasional adoption of an unusually tough stand. His espousal of the cause of Hindustani to fulfill his cherished objective of restoring religious unity was carried through the above exercises and he chose to make linguistic unity the most vital precursor to communal amity. The problem of language and linguistic states in India was long drawn and vexatious during the first half of the last century. In a multilingual nation like India where hundreds and thousands of polyglot and bilingual pockets are found throughout, the ethnic, caste, regional and linguistic affiliations naturally are inextricably linked and more often than not these identities overlap each other. Commenting on the scale and depth of the diversity in India Geertz remarks "India, that vast and various labyrinth of religious, linguistic, regional, racial, tribal and caste allegiances is developing a many sided political form to match for battling irregularity her Daedilian school and cultural structure"<sup>1</sup>.

With the formation of linguistic states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Kerala in the decades following independence the aspirations of larger linguistic groups were to a great extent satisfactorily accomplished. Language no longer is a threat to national integration, contrary to what was apprehended once. After the anti Hindi agitation of the 1960s, no major linguistic conflagration, except the one between the Kannadigas and Tamils in the 1990s, in which riparian rights over Kaveri waters played a major part, has been reported. Since the 1970s the more intense forms of social differentiation like religious divide, ethnic strife and overt caste conflict have relegated linguistic issues to the background and but for the abstruse academic aspects of its linguistic dimension language would not have prominently figured in the postcolonial discourse. This analysis however should not purport to undermine the problem-posing potential of language or make an unduly optimistic prognosis about permanent linguistic unity and the nation, given its deep linguistic diversity, cannot afford to celebrate the respite.

Throughout its recorded history every major Indian language, more specifically the officially designated modern Indian language,

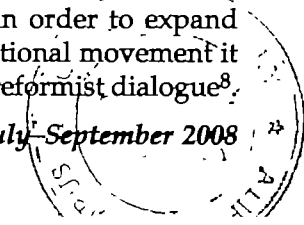
has been found to be latched on to a distinct nationality or at least a feeling of nationality subordinate to the affiliation or loyalty to the larger identity of nationality at social – psychological plane. By the first quarter of the twentieth century in certain parts like Bengal, Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, etc., a crystallized linguistic- nationality identity existed<sup>2</sup>. Identities continually seek legitimation and linguistic identity (in India) is no exception to this rule<sup>3</sup>. Such identities over the decades by constant interaction with other social forces, more importantly with forces of production, metamorphosed into subnationality identities and consequently the post independence era saw the emergence of many sub regional groupings within the same linguistic state seeking to reinforce their identities by demanding separation from the larger identity.

Language and religion have been among the major symbols of group identity in South Asia during the past century and they have been used both to broaden men's identities in the south Asian countries and to undermine the sovereignties of existing political units<sup>4</sup>. In line with Brass's observation the linguistic situation of the subcontinent, since the Moghul period, passed through a dynamic and fluid phase with the evolution of new languages and the attendant aspirations, and these languages emerged as distinct cultural categories adequate enough to influence historical processes, construct sub-national identities and determine physical boundaries. Ethnic unity and cultural identification are defined more by language than by geography or religion<sup>5</sup>. The combine of language and nationalism is subsumed into a more general category into which the 'language of icon', a non-linguistic use of language fits<sup>6</sup>. The greatest 'non linguistic use' of language in India has been its dysfunctional manifestation in the form of Hindi-Urdu rivalry which the present article seeks to delineate. Western Europe's ideal model of the nation mostly draws on the belief that each nation is a separate linguistic entity<sup>7</sup>. In India, however, Hindi, a language though spoken by the majority, could not construct the Indian nationality on its own, instead it was the regional languages that added vitality to the grain of creation of a nationality dotted with several linguistic sub-nationalities.

### **The non-Hindi block asserts before the advent of Gandhi**

The last quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed escalating communal tensions in public life. A strong group of Indian nationalist leaders with deep religious conviction felt that in order to expand the structure of popular support for the Indian national movement it was imperative to discard the earlier westernized reformist dialogue<sup>8</sup>.

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The proposed alternative dialogue was to employ a language of politics that vast multitude of Indian masses would understand and readily accept and the method was to resort to reviving communal memory, in other words drawing inspiration from the real and imaginary glorious Hindu past<sup>9</sup>. Muslim separatism played its part and revivalists of both the faiths contributed immensely to communal expressions and mobilisation. Meanwhile the English educated Indians, recognising the need for appropriate channels to communicate with the people, turned towards their own languages for the purpose. Since a common language could not fulfill their objective, they chose major regional languages<sup>10</sup>. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee exhorted Bengalis to de-anglicise themselves and speak the language understood by the masses, as he felt that only regional languages could stimulate the people<sup>11</sup>.

By the time Gandhi took lead of the nationalist movement several linguistic groups in India were articulating their demand for redrawing the political boundaries of the regions in which their languages were preponderant, in other words, for separate politico-geographical entities for their respective linguistic groups. The spirit of provincialism became evident and the aspirations of the regional languages appeared more conspicuous on the public agenda. During the freedom movement local languages were used as a means of arousing the masses against the alien system and what Hindi was to be on the national scale, the regional languages were on the provincial scale: a rallying cry, and a means of ruling<sup>12</sup>. Of the various aspects of culture, as Keating suggests, language usually becomes the most important in consolidating national identity and Hindi and the regional languages added man-steam to the nationalist aspirations<sup>13</sup>. Two kinds of movements took place during the national movement: large horizontal movements in which people were mobilized by leaders like Gandhi, and smaller regional movements in which regions were vertically integrated based upon common language and culture<sup>14</sup>. Thus the colonial policy and the culture-cum-linguistic movements contributed substantially to the construction of community identities associated with language<sup>15</sup>. Focusing on the tensions involved in the relocation of the boundaries of language and the construction of linguistic autonomy in opposition to the colonial and Assamese nationalist imaginations Misra argues that the formation of public space (regional cultural identity) in the twentieth-century Assam could be traced to a fundamental feature in the colonial conception of Indian society, which consisted of various collectivities defined by settled and impenetrable boundaries.<sup>16</sup>

The upsurge against the partition of Bengal in 1905 involved the masses on an unprecedented scale and spurred the Swadeshi movement, which was marked by Tilak's coining of the magical word 'swaraj', the hartal, clearing the way for Gandhi, and in general the political hyper sensitization of the middle class<sup>17</sup>. The ensuing political environment became conducive for the regional forces to vent their demand for some kind of autonomy and the first in the series of such events was the demand for an Andhra provincial unification of all the Telugu speaking people living in Madras presidency as well as contiguous areas at a conference at Bapatla in 1913<sup>18</sup>. This gave fillip to similar demands in other provinces. Till the last quarter of the nineteenth century in most of the Oriya speaking regions Bengali was the official language, while in the western part neighbouring central provinces (now Chattisgarh) it was Hindi. Not as articulate as the Bengalis, Tamils or Telugus, the Oriya nationalist forces nevertheless were stimulated by the Oriya vernacular press to mobilise public opinion in favour of unifying the Oriya speaking tracts. The Zamindars in 1876 and the Utkal Sabha in 1882 demanded the same<sup>18</sup>. Curzon with administrative convenience uppermost in his mind agreed in principle to create an Oriya speaking state<sup>19</sup>. It came into being much later in 1936<sup>20</sup>. In the nineteenth century Assamese was effectively treated as a dialect of Bengali<sup>21</sup>. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the philological enterprise (printing presses) of the state helped discover the roots and standard structures of the Assamese languages<sup>22</sup>. Located between the language of 'high' culture and the several dialects spoken in the Brahmaputra valley, vernacular Assamese print emerged as the most potent symbol for forging national identities in the region<sup>23</sup>.

Prior to Gandhi's arrival on the national scene many nationalist leaders including zealots of reform movements and leaders with proclivity to revivalism, called for having a common link language. The growing demand for involving the masses in the freedom struggle by making use of regional languages as effective conduits coincided with the persistent efforts of the nationalist leaders to strengthen the movement with the help of a common language. Tilak, way back in 1891, argued in favour of provincial autonomy to enable the linguistic aspirations to flourish. In consonance with his stand on linguistic states he was sympathetic to the demand of the Telugus and other linguistic groups aspiring for provincial autonomy. Thus the pungency in the articulation of the vernacular languages grew parallel with the nationalistic movement.

### Gandhi's stand on provincial languages, Hindustani and Devanagari Script

In the backdrop of the colonial dispensation's divisive policies and the vitiated atmosphere the nationalist movement consistently strove to better the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims and lay foundation for a secular polity and more than any other leader of the day Gandhi placed high premium on communal harmony and coaxed the otherwise nonchalant Congress-nonchalant in regard to the question of communalism-to address the issue with all seriousness and accept Hindu-Muslim unity as an article of faith. His three decade long laborious efforts to cement the bond between the sub-continent's two large religious groups whose numbers ran into millions, was an unparalleled feat in world history in terms of time, space and the numbers involved. He sought to convert the Hindu, Muslim unity into an essential ingredient of the struggle for freedom and an edifice for something like a pan Indian identity, an identity that he passionately visualized. As the first step towards realizing his goal he singularly promoted 'Hindustani'; a synthesis of Hindi and Urdu as the lingua franca or the all India language.

The regional languages were spoken in well-defined areas, often with a historical background giving rise to healthy local patriotism, which was never in conflict with the national personality<sup>24</sup>. The British felt the need for redrawing the boundary lines in 1903 and the Montague- Chelmsford Report of 1918 reiterated the same<sup>25</sup>. Realising the importance of provincialism and vernacular languages and their potential to render the nationalist struggle more dynamic the Indian National Congress in 1908 created a Congress province of Bihar and similar units of Sindh and Andhra in 1917. The issue of linguistic reorganization, especially the Andhra demand was ruled out by the Hindi leaders in the Bombay session of the Congress in 1915<sup>26</sup>. The Andhras pursued their demand at the Lucknow session in 1916 and at Calcutta in 1917<sup>27</sup>. It was at the Nagpur session the Congress formally accepted the linguistic redistribution of provinces in principle<sup>28</sup>. The Hindi leadership of the Congress made no secret of its repugnance to linguistic states as it feared that if the non-Hindi people whose languages by any standards were better developed than theirs got their linguistic states, the Hindi hegemony would not continue after achieving independence<sup>29</sup>. Annie Beasant was not favourably disposed towards the idea and even Gandhi thought the question could be kept in abeyance till the implementing of the reforms<sup>30</sup>.

In his engagement with the linguistic question Gandhi

advocated for the removal of English, a normal practice for the nationalist leaders of all the European colonies, and called for the substitution of Hindustani<sup>31</sup>. Both the Hindus and the Muslims, the two major religious groups of India were to find commonality in this colloquial tongue, which represented the Hindu and Muslim strands of culture and life and doing so he hoped that Hindustani would be accepted by the south<sup>32</sup>. Though his expectation did not come true, with a motive for linguistic accommodation of interests, he overlooked the divisions among Hindus and chose to address the most immediate problem of Hindu Muslim conflict<sup>33</sup>. On Gandhi's understanding of the variegated Indian society Kumar pointed out, 'he did not unlike his predecessors and many of his contemporaries assume the existence of a homogenous political society in India- he had a truer picture of a loose constellation of castes, communities and religious groups'<sup>34</sup>.

His comprehension about the Indian communities and their exclusive social and cultural habits may have been derived from his experience with the South African Indian community, which was diverse from the linguistic view point<sup>35</sup>. Astutely aware of the diverse linguistic situation of India, Gandhi as early as in 1909, much before he plunged into the nationalist struggle, urged the people of one province to learn the language of the other. He drove home the point in one of his articles written while in London "It is necessary for the people of one province to learn the languages of other provinces as well. It is for instance not difficult for a Gujarati to be able to learn Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Hindi, etc. If we spend only half the effort we do in learning English in the learning of Indian languages, there will be born a new atmosphere in the country and a good measure of progress will be achieved"<sup>36</sup>.

He was of the view that Bengalis and Tamils who by then had experienced higher levels of enlightenment took an early lead over rest of the country in obtaining modern education and were forthright in their opposition to Hindi could pick up Hindustani very easily. He wrote that an average Bengali could learn Hindustani in two months, if he gave it three hours a day and a Dravidian (Tamilian) in six months at the same rate<sup>37</sup>. In many of his writings and speeches he never fought shy to extol the virtues of English and its utility in the contemporary times. He said that he never disliked English whose riches were infinite and which was endowed with a wealth of knowledge. He however, insisted that it never belonged to our soil as well as cultural ethos and hence should be replaced with Hindustani. His rejection of English is first to be understood in symbolic terms, of constituting the Indian nation in the act of liberation

from the British<sup>38</sup>.

Gandhi's initial indifference to the demand for separate linguistic provincial status was due to his fear that encouraging the use of regional languages would hinder his mission to make Hindustani, the national language<sup>39</sup>. However, based on his perspicaciousness of the intricacies of the Indian society and its linguistic behaviour and his prognostication that the regional forces were soon to consolidate the nationalist movement he endorsed the proposal of creation of linguistic provinces in 1918. The Congress fell in line with his logic and in its bid to broaden its base and turn itself into a wider and more inclusive forum it accepted the general principle of drawing provincial boundaries on the basis of language. Thus for the first time the question of linguistic-nationality was addressed on the largest platform by the largest mass organization in British India. Thenceforth, within as well as outside the Congress, numerous resolutions, amendments and debates in regard to provincial and linguistic autonomy took place and the question of language and creation of linguistic states featured prominently in the Congress movement. In 1928 the Nehru committee resolved to work for the creation of separate Sind and Utkal states.

In 1905 Bal Gangadhar Tilak, widely hailed as the father of Indian unrest and criticised by some quarters for his revivalist orientation, declared that Hindi in Devanagari script be made the national language of India<sup>40</sup>. Tilak's pronouncement found its logical conclusion in Gandhi's promotion of the same. In his analysis of language politics in India, Robert D. King emphasizes that Gandhi's stand on the question of script was far from reality and in his presidential address to the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in 1918 he traversed into the realm of 'utopian' linguistics.<sup>41</sup> Gandhi said "Hindi is that language which is spoken in the north by both Hindus and Muslims and which is written neither in the Nagari or the Persian script. This Hindi is neither too Sanskritised nor too Persianised. The sweetness which I find in the village Hindi is found neither in the speech of the Muslims of Lucknow nor in that of the Hindu pundits of Prayag. The language which is easily understood by the masses is the best... It is unnecessary for Hindus to reject Persian words and for Muslims to reject Sanskrit words from their speech. A harmonious blend of the two will be as beautiful as the confluence of Ganga and Yamuna and last forever... There is no doubt or difficulty in regard to script. As things are, Muslims will patronize the Arabic script while Hindus will mostly use the Nagari script. Both scripts will therefore have to be accorded their due place. Officials must know both scripts."<sup>41</sup>

In spite of its idealistic connotations his advice did not gauge



the likely insult to what King calls the 'iconicity' of language<sup>42</sup>. The basic discrepancy in Gandhi's espousal of a Hindustani neutral between Hindi and Urdu was its failure to comprehend the symbolism or the iconicity<sup>43</sup>. On numerous occasions he emphatically called for categorical acceptance of Devanagari script. His concern for the Muslims vis-a-vis his dogged and unqualified support for Devanagari script certainly appeared dichotomous, but nevertheless it was born out of his anxiety to avert national disunity, which he predicted due to the linguistic fragmentation. Even his bitterest critic cannot attribute his longing for Hindustani and Devanagari to any kind of predilection or parochial view. In course of his painstaking efforts in furthering the cause of Hindustani and its script and trying to mollify the tempers, the zealot in him assumed the role of a trained linguist and the doctrinaire-democrat. While justifying his crusade for Hindi/Hindustani and Devanagari he always exercised restraint and used persuasion coated with logic rather than intimidating polemics. At the meeting of the All-India Sahitya Parishad, at Madras in 1937 he underscored the need for the people to know the languages of other provinces. He declared "It is also the object of the conference to stimulate in our people the desire to know languages of other provinces, e.g., Gujaratis should know Tamil, Bengalis should know Gujarati and so on...But to this end a common script is quite essential... Over 90 per cent of our people are illiterate. We have to start with a clean slate with them. Why should we not start making them literate by means of a common script? In Europe they have tried the experiment of a common script quite successfully...After a good deal of controversy, there is a consensus of opinion that the common script can be Devanagari and none else. Urdu is claimed a rival, but I think neither Urdu nor Roman has the perfection and phonetic capacity of Devanagari".<sup>44</sup>

Given his understanding of the linguistic sentiments, Gandhi in all likelihood must have been aware of the possible consequence of his conservative approach to the language issue-of being assailed as a Hindi fanatic-especially at a time when the anti-Brahmin and anti-Hindi movement that ran counter to the Congress led nationalist movement was at its peak in the Madras state. By then the idea of mother tongue had already organized not only educational practices in southern India, but also the political, historical, geographic and literary domains<sup>45</sup>. Hence Gandhi's exhortation for the acceptance of Hindustani and Devanagari by the non-Hindi groups was likely to be interpreted by the masses as coercive and undemocratic and something similar to what Fasold (1984:12) calls as 'language shift', a

process which refers to situations in which a community gives up one language completely in favour of another. These fears however did not deter Gandhi from relentlessly promoting the script<sup>46</sup>.

### **Hindustani caught in the cauldron of Hindi-Urdu rivalry**

Any discussion on linguistic issues in India will invariably gravitate towards the Hindi-Urdu rift. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries limited mobility and almost non-existent modern education resulted in the birth and growth of a number of regional languages independent of each other and by the seventeenth century the cohabitation of these languages with Arabic-Persian brought into being a new distinct language which later came to be known as Hindi or Hindustani<sup>47</sup>. It was a middle brow bazaar language spoken by the Moghul Sepoys with a mixture of an Indian language and the Arabic-Persian of the military barracks and as the speakers of this language were distinguished by their uniform, called Urdu in Arabic, it later came to be known as Urdu<sup>48</sup>. The British were the first Europeans to touch the nook and corner of the sub-continent<sup>49</sup>. They wondered at its unfathomable linguistic diversity and what still intrigued them was that one of the languages, Hindustani, more than the rest, was spoken and understood by majority of the people<sup>50</sup>. After assuming sovereign powers, while grouping people into identifiable categories based on religion, to their surprise the Company officials discovered that the non-Muslims either used the Perso-Arabic script or an extremely limited underdeveloped script with regional variations called the Mahajani or Khaithi to write<sup>51</sup>. The earliest form of the present-day Urdu-Hindustani poetical speech was 'Rekhta' which emerged from the attempts to write literature in Persianised Delhi Hindustani<sup>52</sup>.

The decline of the Muslim rule and the advent of the British rule were accompanied by the corresponding decline of Persianised Urdu. The English East India Company realized that it was prudent to conduct business with the natives in their own languages and subsequently J.B.Gilchrist of Fort William college at Calcutta engaged a group of writers to write Hindustani prose, which was represented by two distinctly different styles: Hindi excluding Persian words to the extent possible, and Urdu firmly riveted to its Persian moorings. Gilchrist observed that in a country where pedantry is esteemed as the touchstone of learning, the Muslim took pride in his Arabic and Persian and the Hindu in Sanskrit and 'Hiduwee'<sup>53</sup>. According to him before the Muslim conquest Brij Bhasa was spoken all over north India which was referred to by the Muslims as 'Hinduwee', the

language of the Hindus (*ibid*)<sup>54</sup>. It was he who termed it as 'Hindustanee'<sup>55</sup>.

The English East India Company thus sometimes out of political expediency and mostly out of administrative and business considerations unwittingly charted a course that left the gulf between Hindi and Urdu yawning. Mohan laments that linguistically speaking, the blending process with Sanskrit was insensitive to the natural tendencies of Hindi and the Sanskritized Hindi like Rekhta Urdu came into existence in response to Hindi's speaker community feeling sidelined by the new English speaking leadership of post-colonial India. In a sense it was the result of the ordinary Hindi speakers experiencing a state of Diglossia<sup>56</sup>.

The movement against Urdu which was substituted for Persian as the language of the law courts and administration, started in Bihar, then a part of the Bengal Presidency in the 1850s<sup>57</sup>. The intensive campaign of eminent people for its replacement by Hindi written in Nagari script involved petitioning on a massive scale, which convinced the British administration to introduce Hindi as the court language in Bihar<sup>58</sup>. The move to link employment with the knowledge of Hindi and popular movements in support of Hindi in the North Western provinces and elsewhere in the Gangetic belt increased the chasm between the Hindus and the Muslims and forced the latter to launch the Aligarh movement and embark on purifying Hindustani Urdu by Persianising it and making concerted efforts to protect Urdu. Keating's observation that language or religion is used as proxy to mark ethnic differentiation is quite relevant to the Hindi Urdu rivalry<sup>59</sup>. Gandhi while at school was very much a witness to the Sanskrit Persian rivalry as his teacher prevailed on him to opt for Sanskrit so that he would remain anchored to his faith and Vaishnavism in particular<sup>60</sup>. Since his generation grew up watching communal polarisation intertwined with linguistic rivalry he could see it from a perspective closer to pluralism. It is interesting to note that the communal as well as linguistic rivalries did not impede the progress of the anti colonial struggle as intensely as they operated to the detriment of each other. In other words, these differences could at best stain the secular effort for freedom but not lacerate it. These parochial identities fought against each other for themselves, but did not seriously damage the overriding cause of attainment of freedom.

The sectarian orientation and the bellicosity that took roots in the nineteenth century continued with the same vigor and cascaded into the collective psyche as a result the nationalist movement's leadership during the twentieth century, despite its secular disposition

and accommodative gesture, found it daunting to cleanse the language issue of the communal virus and persuade the masses to accept Hindustani. The communal angle of the saga apart, Nayar sees some instrumental justification in the widespread support for Hindi as it alone qualified to be the most-serviceable link among the prospective developing Indian languages at states level and it drew upon Sanskrit which constituted the basic core of the Indo-Aryan languages and contributed considerably to the vocabulary of the Dravidian languages as well<sup>61</sup>. A striking advantage with Hindi was that for the majority of the populace Persianised Urdu was unintelligible, while even the south had little difficulty in understanding the Sanskrit words of Hindi.

For Gandhi the overarching issue concerning the anti-colonial struggle was communal harmony and he tirelessly kept on exploring newer methods to normalize the vitiated atmosphere and restore mutual trust between the two communities. Due to his experience-born-conviction that Islam was an inseparable component India's composite cultural matrix, for him, naturally, Hindu Muslim unity was concomitant of the struggle for freedom and secular India. Hence, he unmistakably found in Hindustani a workable remedy for the problem and his contemplation of Hindustani becoming the 'quintessential national language' was guided by a conscious and pragmatic strategy to address the problem of communalism in a new perspective. His adoption of Hindustani, the vernacular version of Hindi used as a lingua franca in large parts of the subcontinent by then, as the new national language was equally pregnant with symbolic meaning: it was a dialect shared by Hindi and Urdu speakers, and therefore by both Hindus and Muslims (as it was also a 'low, non-literary variety with all the corresponding populist connotations')<sup>62</sup>.

His insistence on the production of a single language, a gesture uncharacteristic of one whose unwavering commitment to the pluralist ethos of the multilingual and multiethnic nation was too well known, was more because of practical reasons than an obdurate desire to enforce unity. For him the main reasons for Hindi/Hindustani to become the national language were its extent and reach and its inclusive character; in the sense that the Muslim masses could not be mobilized by any other language or means, and he certainly must have been aware of the fact that Hindi in terms of literary value was much inferior to at least four Indian languages. As Keating suggests a common language is an important element in fostering of civic community, political equality and mass participation and can be used as a mechanism for integration rather than exclusion, Gandhi sought

to go by the idiom of a common language generating oneness<sup>63</sup>. He envisaged an Indian federal union and a single market in which administrators and citizens, voters and politicians, recruits and officers, producers and consumers, employers and workers should be able to make themselves understood to one another<sup>64</sup>.

In 1909 Gandhi for the first time wrote in *Hind Swaraj* that Hindi should be the universal language<sup>65</sup>. By 1917 his support for Hindustani became an invariant in his thinking and his political and educational programmes, and he never compromised on this issue while he was flexible on many other issues<sup>66</sup>. He defined Hindustani as a combination of Hindi and Urdu, neither highly Sanskritised nor highly Persianised or Arabianised<sup>67</sup>. The definition though sounds simple and is least pompous is a well thought out and comprehensive statement and steers clear of complexities and usual definitional problems. In one of his outbursts which King terms as shocking, Gandhi denounced the urge for every form of speech to be perpetuated and developed as anti-national and anti-universal and calls for the merger of all underdeveloped and unwritten dialects in the great Hindustani stream and in a consolatory gesture added that the merger would be a sacrifice not a suicide<sup>68</sup>.

Nehru, whose secular credentials, liberalism and vision made him the inevitable choice of Gandhi to lead independent India was always in sound agreement with his mentor on Hindustani being made the national language. As one who always took pride in his family's affinity with Persian and Urdu, on many occasions he went to the extent of condemning in strong words the increasing encroachment of Sanskrit on Hindi at the cost of the latter's native nuances and especially the Urdu content. In 1937 on Gandhi's request he wrote an essay on the question of language in which he stated that the rivalry between Hindi and Urdu is harmful to both and both Devanagari and the Urdu Perso-Arabic scripts, must coexist peacefully<sup>69</sup>. Nehru was more committed to secularism than Gandhi in the modern sense of the term and integrated his mentor's mission with the nation building process in the following decades with considerable success.

Gandhi was visibly disillusioned as the relations between the Hindus and Muslims worsened on account of the belligerent stand of the reactionary elements in the Hindi and Urdu camps and the resultant situation which was inimical to the progress of Hindustani. The Congress ministry formed in 1937 in the united provinces (present UttarPradesh), under the influence of revivalists encouraged the Sanskritised form of Hindi thus yielding no quarter to Urdu. The Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in which the orthodox elements had a strong say popularized the cause of Hindi instead of Hindustani as desired

by Gandhi and the Hindustani Prachar Sabha floated by him could not accomplish its objective in the face of the firmly entrenched and wide spread Hindi movement led by some Congress (Hindu) notables with revivalist outlook<sup>70</sup>. The All India Muslim League at the Lucknow session held in 1937, declared to make Urdu the universal language and in 1939 the Hindu Mahasabha announced that Sanskritised Hindi and not Hindustani should be the national language<sup>71</sup>. Distraught at the growing linguistic particularism and exclusion that deepened the communal polarization he left the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in 1945. However such developments, including the carnage following independence which was grossly antithetical to what he stood for all his life, could not make him shelve his didactic pursuit of championing the cause of Hindustani, Muslims and Urdu. He wrote in the *Harijan*, "It would be wrong to say that if the Muslims of the Union refuse to learn the Nagari script, Hindustani cannot become the national language. Whether the Muslims learn the Nagari script or not, the Hindus and the people of all other religions sought to learn the two scripts... If the Hindus wish to, they can boycott the Urdu script and Urdu words, but all will be the losers thereby... Difficult times lie ahead of us".<sup>72</sup>

A few days before his assassination, unmindful of the 'customary' and uncharitable allegation that Muslim appeasement was his sole agenda, he argued for retaining both the scripts and that was the last time when he discussed the two-script proposal. He wrote "All that is wanted is that the Urdu script should not be boycotted, as such boycott would imply discrimination... With this background, we, who believe in unity and are opposed to civil strife, are bound to adopt both the scripts... Having regard to the present communal antagonism, the boycott of the Urdu script would be regarded as an anti-democratic measure"<sup>73</sup>.

Narrating an event that took place twelve days before the assassination of Gandhi, Barz gives a terse account of the sad man's unrelenting support to Urdu, which due to the circumstances following independence appeared as a symbol of the 'hurt psyche'. On 4<sup>th</sup> January of that year Gandhi in the Gujarati edition of his newspaper *Harijan* declared that he was closing down the Devanagari *Harijan* as the Hindi Urdu rivalry was responsible for the drop in the sales of the Urdu *Harijan*<sup>74</sup>. In response to a letter which was critical of his decision and suggested that he terminate the English *Harijan*, he stated that the very thinking that Hindi in Devanagari script alone should be the national language was flawed and added that he would not close the English edition as it was not responsible for the decline in the readership of the Urdu

edition<sup>75</sup>. His wish that Hindi/Hindustani assumed a syncretic shape did not materialise during his lifetime.

### Conclusion

Gandhi favoured Hindi/Hindustani for it could ensure Hindu Muslim unity. Ambedkar, an erudite constitutionalist having imbibed western liberal thought to the core supported Hindi for the exclusive reason of preserving the inviolability of the national unity<sup>76</sup> while Lohia, a fiery nationalist with German training, during the decade following independence embarked on 'banish English' campaign due to his firm conviction that only a native language stimulates national resurgence and as a tactical ploy to mobilize the masses against the Congress<sup>77</sup>. However Gandhi was never in favour of foisting Hindi on the unwilling masses and so was Nehru. No wonder Hindi protagonists even today squarely blame Nehru for ignoring the claims of Hindi. Gandhi, Ambedkar, Lohia with their distinct brands of politics and with varying degrees of support for Hindi for different reasons, insisted that it should be the national language in every sense as they contemplated it to serve as the most effective and durable cultural category of the pan-Indian nationalism while the non Hindi blocks harboured fears of being swamped by Hindi in every aspect of public life in view of its large speech community and proximity to the central authority at Delhi.

The quantum of linguistic unrest was reduced to its minimum as each linguistic group received its share of its own in the federal polity<sup>78</sup>. India has provided a local political milieu that is conducive to the flowering of many linguistically-rooted cultures and there by evolved a system which greatly enriches the cultural life of a nation as a whole<sup>79</sup>. The hopes and the fears of the leaders as well as the non-Hindi blocks in regard to the preponderance of Hindi did not come true. On the employment front Hindi could garner ample benefits that accrue from state patronage. With its international status and reach it has been able to permeate the cultural domains of other linguistic groups through the state run Doordarshan, satellite television and popular cinema. However, despite government patronage for decades, Hindi proved to be unequal to the task of replacing English and the usage of English, on the other hand, has become more extensive than the colonial times and there is little doubt that it is catapulted to the position of *numero uno* among the world languages today.

The regional languages in addition to gaining territorial autonomy could protect, preserve and rejuvenate their respective socio-cultural spaces in the face of Hindi becoming wide spread as

never before. After 1970s language became the least divisive force with the mass media, especially the numerous regional language television channels providing ample 'infotainment', fulfilling the regional languages' aspirations. Every major linguistic group is adequately represented in the Indian Diaspora, which of late has become synonymous with success in the advanced nations, thus obtaining access to transnational experiences made easier by globalization. Linguistic determinism in India, contrary to the popular notion did not result in political secessionism; but succeeded in effecting the fragmentation of the national consciousness, a process which was never detrimental to the linguistic unity and pluralist ethos.

Gandhi's tenacious advocacy of Hindi/Hindustani had enormous symbolic value in terms of bridging communal divide, breaking linguistic enclosure and lending participatory character to the national movement and social reform. Though critics point out that it could have required greater scientific finesse and modernist approach to address the complex and mundane problems arising out of the formulation and implementation of the language policy and its implications his method served as an 'inclusive' strategy and conveyed a message for the future secular India.

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# Violence veiled in Religious Metaphors\*

*Ignatius Jesudasan*

WE ARE NOT SENSITIVE enough to the nature of the language we use whenever we are talking about our own identities. Religion is one of the major metaphorical modes of collective identity affirmation. If language as such is a metaphorical signifier of realities, which are distinct from the language itself, religious language must be doubly or more than doubly metaphorical. But the literalizing of the metaphor is all too common an act of forgetfulness and reduction of the infinite distance between reality and language, which confuses the word with reality or deed performed.

The presupposition of such an understanding of language is that of an imperative of God himself. Such had been the claim of ancient charismatic leaders. Their communities accepted and esteemed them as their founding patriarchal priests or prophets, and treated the laws they laid down in their own words as the words of God himself. Theology was the ultimate metaphor, which the ancient societies could think of for legitimizing their right to exist and exert their power over and against all their opponents. This is where and how religious metaphor at once veils and justifies collective violence against its own dissenting individuals as well as rivals from outside its ranks. We are able to recognize violence when the WTC collapses, the London metro explodes, and serial bombs burst in the busy Delhi market place or packed places of worship in Iraq. We are also uncritically ready to suspect the Muslims as terrorists. We are not conscious enough to detect or critical enough to suspect that, if Islam as an ethnic reality induced violence, our own religions could be and have really been forces of public and private violence too.

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I have made an exposition of this problem with reference to Judeo-Christian metaphors in a recently published book of mine, titled *Roots of Religious Violence: A Critique of Ethnic Metaphors*.<sup>1</sup> This article reflects the main thesis of that book. In his *Terror in the Mind of God*, Mark Juergensmeyer argues to violence as fundamental to the structures of the belief system of all major religions, which underscore some humans as being able to read the mind of God. I confine my focus to the metaphorical structure of the Judeo-Christian sacred literary and interpretative traditions. Since I see metaphor as the master key to religious violence, I start by focusing attention on the basis for the making of metaphors.

### **The Making of Metaphors**

Metaphors are made on the basis of the analogy, which consists in the similarity within the difference between two or more species or objects. Metaphors, therefore, are also analogical and not undifferentiatedly univocal in meaning. Hence they cannot be reduced to univocal literal meaning. But with the repeated use of the same metaphors, people tend to take them in a literally unique meaning. In themselves, metaphors are acts of renaming one object with the name or quality of another, performed in order to make the one functionally synonymous with the other. It is in such synonymously renaming metaphorical process that the literalist reduction of one thing to identity with the other takes place.

Such metaphorical renaming acts are performed in order either to glorify or demean the person or object renamed. They are expressions of subjective approval or disapproval on the basis of presuppositions about ethno-ethical values under the dualistic categorization of good and evil. Metaphors are made and maintained in order to perpetuate the same value perceptions and judgments for all times to come as it was in its past beginning. In serving such a purpose or function, metaphors can be classified as manipulative propaganda,<sup>2</sup> unless and until people begin to recognize and offer resistance<sup>3</sup> and alternatives to them. As the alternatives are also metaphors, which are modeled on imitation or mimesis, metaphors are constitutive of mimetic rivalry between ethnic identities.

### **Metaphor's Connection to Myth, History and Scriptures**

The gap between metaphor, myth, history and scriptures is small.<sup>4</sup> It can be easily filled in by any person of genius, who is endowed with a creative imagination. That imagination works on the proximity, similarity or interaction between any two persons or things to create a common identity between them. As such, metaphor is a conscious

or sub-conscious act of falsification, which assumes and asserts its tentatively playful construct as the reality itself. It engages in such falsification for a variety of reasons. They could be its love and admiration of one and fear or hatred of another. Both of them are pre-existing or presupposed emotions, which are not freshly or critically examined in the light of any change in the present context or with reference to the thoughts and motives of the persons spoken of. Instead the past is used to interpret the present, or else the latest situation or report is used to reinforce the past image and impression. When this whole operation is performed through the medium of the metaphor, we hardly have or dare to take the time to question it, but simply believe it all because the report sounds so aesthetically and movingly convincing.

The metaphorical, mythical and historical and scriptural imagination builds itself on human credulity, which it feeds and caters to abundantly. Like the metaphor, the myth is also a story with a design on its hearers. This design or purpose is what the narrator has intended. The narrator wants to carry the audience along his or her own line of thought and belief. The narration seeks to turn the audience for or against the subject of the narration. It seeks to inculcate in its audience the same attitude as the narrator's, so as either to repeat and perpetuate history as unchangingly and oppressively as it has been going on, or else to change it towards new paradigms of openness to grace, truth and freedom for all. This is the usually unstated purpose of the origin-myths of ethnic identities.

These assertions are as true and applicable to the Bible and the New Testament as of sacred lore of other ancient peoples vis-à-vis their ethno-cultural successors. The New Testament has used the older Bible as the myth shaping the pattern of the life of Jesus and the new community of a multi-ethnic church which he founded. So Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah and John the Baptist have been reduced to shadowy forerunners of Jesus and his church. This was the way the evangelists turned the Jewish rejection of Jesus into the basis of their claim to Jesus' believers becoming the people of God, inheriting through their belief all that God had, biblically speaking, promised to Abraham and David. Thus through the play of allusive ethno-religious imagination Jesus and every true Christian became the new Adam, the new Abel, the new son of man and the new messianic son of Abraham, David and of God. Does this not make clear that Christianity arose in the ideological violence of mimetic rivalry with Judaism in retaliation for the physical violence, which the latter inflicted on Jesus

and his believers? This brings us to the next theme of the religious connection to violence.

### **The Religious Connection to Violence**

Connecting religion to violence would indeed shock the naive religious believers, because they are more steeped in pious platitudes than factual religious history. Religion has historically worked through violence also. Violence is the implicit or explicit display of a threat, intended to frighten the viewer or force the hearer into submission to its pedagogical purpose. Religion pushes into its pedagogical service the dogmatic notions of heaven as other-worldly reward and hell as other-worldly penalty, only to ensuring conformity to the empirically established this-worldly order. Dogmatic notions are projective constructs of the religious imagination, which try to replace actual ignorance about the future with the simulacrum or semblance of knowledge. Religion, therefore, is merely the metaphorical band wagon and second fiddle of the socio-cultural political establishment. It uses the non-empirical dogmas only to reinforce the empirically known present order of things. Religious socialization<sup>5</sup>, therefore, becomes a pedagogy in fear and ignorance rather than in total knowledge and freedom.

While thus under-writing the established or establishing of a socio-political order<sup>6</sup>, with its other-worldly reward or sanctions, religion also implicitly justifies the violence of that earthly order. Creedal or dogmatic knowledge becomes the invisible power of the hand that rocks both the cradle and the throne. Therefore, political systems would back up those religions or other-worldly dogmatic ideas, which would go to backing them up in their own mystifyingly ideological fashion. On their reverse gear, they would oppose all religious or other-worldly ideologies, which are likely to shake them up. As backing or shaking up one or other of the this-worldly establishments, religions are not wholly a-political, but very much this-worldly forces with claims of other-worldly knowledge. Religion, therefore, is an other-worldly metaphor of the this-worldly order itself. Let us now turn to the violence in this metaphor itself.

### **Violence in the Metaphors of Faith**

Faith is presumptive knowledge or revelation of the invisible world. All the same, it is described in terms of visions or visible realities. Making out the invisible to be visible is to construct a metaphor and engage in poetry. It is, at once, to claim objectivity to the construct of the subjective imaginative faculty. In staking such a claim, the claimants reduce its subjective metaphorical quality to its literalized objectivity,



which is an open violation and contradiction of the poetic metaphor-making process itself. But poetic metaphors are produced with such speed and fascination that their consumers hardly have the time or rational motivation to digest them. Instead they avidly swallow and believe them as objective, unmindful of the logical contradictions involved. They do so, because they identify blind faith in their symbols and metaphors with total love of and hope for and commitment to their ethnic identity.

There are also many other ways in which metaphors are and turn their literal believers violent.<sup>7</sup> 1. As the compressed contraction of a whole event or reality in a word or phrase, metaphor is not only forcible but also forced language. 2. As working on fears and desires rather than concrete facts, metaphors are ideologies of socially exploitative and explosive potency. 3. The metaphor shrewdly hides rather than unveiling its ideological intent on its creedal consumers, thereby leaving them sub-conscious of its explosively exploitative potency. 4. To compress so much in so little and yet to expect all to believe, understand and assent to everything as literally true is psychological violence on the hearers and readers of the message. It is in defensively veiling it all from critical view that the poetically metaphorical narratives turn their believers into violent warriors against every opposition. 5. The metaphor makes a part the representative of the whole. Though every part belongs to its whole class or body, no individual part is or can be a realistic substitute for the whole class or body. 6. Every metaphor has had its birth and roots in its own ethno-historical context. Imposing faith in that metaphor as the condition of the salvation of all ethnic groups and histories is a veiled form of one ethnic group's imperialism on others. 7. Finally we come to the metaphorical claim of the words of the prophets as the words of God. Its probable origin was the original wonder at the power of the metaphor-making poets. Starting with the humble attribution of the metaphorical poetic inspiration to God, it was eventually reduced to the literal identification of the ancient written words with those of God himself. This belief has been forcibly maintained, because it empowered official interpreters of scriptures to exercise dominance over their hearers. The foundational reason for the whole social process was that religion itself was a metaphor of ethno-cultural identity.

### **Religions as Metaphors of Ethnic Identities**

If scriptures were composed of ethno-poetic metaphorically made-up myths, it was because religions themselves were metaphorical synonyms for ethnic identities. If this is not transparent to us today,

it is because we have moved into the post-modernist ethos with its separation of the secular state from the sacred religious domain. If we read the origins of any religion, which is older than a thousand years, we are most likely to discover their non-distinction from their ethno-political identity. Ancient religions and societies were identical with and non-distinct from each other. Religion was society and social life was religious life. The difference is that while secular history is told in prosaically literal discourse, religion clothes and covers it in poetically metaphorical rituals. The latter not merely narrate old histories, but also seek to continue and make new histories in the imitative pattern of the old by making new metaphors to build on and reinforce the old. Even so, new metaphors are resisted as sowing division among the ethnic identities, which seek to subsist only on the older metaphors.

As hearers assume the poetically metaphorical narrations about their ethnic founders as literally true, the metaphors become the relatively stable emotive-rational foundations of these ethnic identities. The latter make the ethics and theology of their founders the unquestionable authority-base of their own ethics and theology. Anyone questioning or qualifying the founder's ethics and its theological base would be classified as an enemy of the group and its founder. Thus rational challenge and questions get suppressed through the fear of penal actions that the collective group or its official representatives might take on those who bring such challenges to public consciousness. Since rational cognitive openness is perceived as a potential threat of ethno-religious polarization, faith in the ethno-religious founders and their scriptures are also turned into effective acts of cognitive closure<sup>8</sup> on other ethnic groups and their cognitive metaphors. The radical problem with it is that it negates the analogy of being and of knowledge, on which all metaphors of faith are built. On the pragmatic side it leads to battles of ethnically rivalling metaphors. Biblical narrations can be cited as instances verifying these assertions.<sup>9</sup>

### **Adamic Myth as Biblical Example of Violent Cognitive Closure**

Cognitive closure is the metaphorical sign of the closed group's desire to exclude others from its ranks. It arises from its feeling of theologized superiority to the ethnic identities built up by other metaphors. Its sure assumption is that the superior may not mingle with the lower. Not so sure is its readiness to absorb and upgrade the lower to its own ranks. Superiority and inferiority negate equality and assert hierarchy. Hierarchy and equality are mutually contradictory. We see such contradiction metaphorically represented

as typological of all humans with a concrete version of Israeli history. I read the Adamic narrative in Genesis 2-3 as a mythologized version of Israeli history up to the end of its monarchic period.

The founding metaphor of Israel as an ethnic nationality was its faith in all humans as equal and analogously made images of God. This faith was born of its early historical experience of its negation in its slavery to the Pharaoh of Egypt. But that very experience eventually veered its democratically equalitarian faith to monarchic hierarchy. While hating the monarchies, which had enslaved them, the Israelis irrationally sought to imitate and rival them through their elimination or subordination. This self-contradictory tendency was strongly built into the whole Law of Moses. The Adamic myth metaphorically represented this contradiction as the ever besetting temptation of Israel, pulling it between the tree of life and the tree of death, renamed as the tree of forbidden knowledge of good and evil. If slavery was a theological sin and evil, mastery or monarchy could not be a theological virtue or good. Anyone who hated slavery should not aspire to be king or master. But neither Israel nor humanity has learnt the historic lesson. And so the story of Adam repeats itself in individual and collective histories.

The author of the myth dramatizes the temptation directly through the serpent's approach to Eve and indirectly through Eve's approach to Adam. Adam in the Garden of Eden was the metaphorical substitute for Israel's idea of social law and order. Eve was a metaphorical fruit of a tree from outside the garden of Israel. She represented the Pharaoh's daughter, whom Solomon married. The serpent was the metaphor of the alien Egyptian law and order, which was the continuous seduction, through which Israel lost the purity of its ethno-cultural and theological identity. In attributing the eventual political death of Israel at its Babylonian captivity to its mimetic rivalry with Egypt, the authors of the myth uphold the old world's practice of cognitive closure as a valid ethnic ideal for their times.<sup>10</sup> But they did so by imputing the closure to their God himself.

### **Is the God of the Bible a violent one?**

Under this title I explore the anthropological reflections of Rene Girard<sup>11</sup> and his commentator, particularly Raymund Schwager<sup>12</sup>, on violence in the Bible. According to him, Girard's view of the Old Testament is as a long and laborious exodus out of the world of violence and sacred projections, which does not reach its goal. His explanation for it is that the mechanisms of violence and projection remained hidden.<sup>13</sup>

Historical, prophetic and sapiential writings in the Old Testament

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abound with the talk of individual and collective violence against other individuals or whole cities that are killed or decimated. Whether they were historically exact or exaggerated narrations, and written with relish or disgust, approval or disapproval, they stand together for all to read. Schwager counts as many as 600 passages, which explicitly talk about nations, kings or individuals attacking, destroying and killing others, and authors not hesitating to speak of the unrestrained violence. But the biblical meaning of violence comes to the fore with focus on its quality rather than quantity. The Bible's qualitative definition of violence is as sin. Since so much of this violence is spoken of as divine retaliation for human violence, the question arises whether the god of the Bible is also a violent god.<sup>14</sup>

Although the prophetic writings speak of God in his anger destroying human beings, the stories are direct narrations about the invasion of one nation by another. The anger of God is the old prophet's metaphorical interpretation of the foreign invasion. It is human violence which is spoken as the divine. Hence whether the texts speak of Yahweh's direct or indirect intervention makes no factual difference.<sup>15</sup> God talk in these contexts was but a metaphorical attribution of human actions and motives to God. There are also other texts and contexts in which the notion of a merciless punishment persists. Yet it is neither Yahweh himself nor other humans who punish the guilty. But the guilty become the victims of their own crimes. They are self-punished. Such ideas find repeated expression in Isaiah 50:11, Jeremiah 44:8, Psalm 7:13-17 and Proverbs 8:36 and 26: 27. We may interpret this phase of thought as secular discourse without theological metaphors. But Schwager cites several other texts to show that self-punishment and punishment at God's hands need not be two distinct experiences. "Whenever divine anger and divine vengeance are mentioned, one has in mind concrete deeds of human beings through which the perpetrators punish themselves."<sup>15</sup>

Girard, therefore, may be throwing some valuable light on theological language when he says that sacred conceptions are nothing other than projections of aggressive fantasies upon a scapegoat. Such projections could even make God a scapegoat, who embodies all evil and is at the same time the bringer of salvation. By being transferred to him, aggression can be diverted from the community to the outside. But even while diverting the violence, its participants remain unaware of the mechanism of projection and transfer. When the true God begins to reveal himself, the unconscious process, which produces the false ideas of God, will be gradually exposed. Then humans will begin to recognize how they had falsely attributed to God the revenge, which they themselves had wanted to take on their fellow humans.<sup>17</sup> This

is how and where the Gospels turn into ironic correctives, which venture to move beyond biblical prophecy.

### **Biblical Prophecy as Theocratic Metaphor**

We are only accustomed to seeing metaphor as a single word or phrase with a dual or more than dual meaning. Since I am speaking of whole systems like religion, prophecy and whole corpus of literature as metaphors, this is likely to take the conventional readers by surprise. Hence I need to justify my interpretation with reference to the substantive content and conventional metaphorical manner in the religious realm of prophetic literature. The Hebrew prophets and other biblical authors conceptualized their ethnic history in terms of their faith in the God of their fathers. Their history, therefore, was a theological metaphor, which legitimized theocracy in its republican, prophetic and monarchic phases of leadership. After the abolition of monarchy, in the absence of recognizable prophecy, it turned in the direction of theocratic priesthood. Christianity identified itself with the whole history of Israel, when it summed up all these successive phases of that history simultaneously in the historic person of Jesus.

To accept prophecy as metaphor of collective subjective faith is not to equate or confuse it with objective truth as universally verifiable knowledge. The role, which any metaphor performs, is only to convince the hearers to believe the content of the allegation without any direct proof or evidence to establish it. Truth and metaphor then are not synonymous terms. Hence metaphor plays the dubious role of substituting the proof and evidence for the truth of its allegation. In this sense, metaphor becomes a rational-seeming ideology, which veils and justifies its own propaganda as the self-fulfilling prophetic truth.<sup>18</sup>

All the same, biblical prophecy has decisively influenced the distinctive Semitic faiths of the Jews, Christians and Muslims. Yet, the Bible reveals its prophecy to have arisen and functioned as the theologized political opposition to all other ruling hierarchies down the ages. The biblical authors predominantly interpreted their ethnic history along the prophetic rather than the monarchic or priestly perspective. They represent the prophets as the critically exclusive seers or hearers and speakers of God's word to monarchic or priestly rulers. This was due to their nomadic history as a distinct ethnic identity having-begun with non-monarchic and non-priestly charismatic patriarch like Abraham. Even when these institutions had developed later, the literate writers of the history identified themselves with the critical prophetic rather than the royal or priestly roles. Prophecy had become a personally distanced and collectively

detached way of interpretatively making and influencing future history.

The root metaphors made by the founding prophets became the self-definitions of the respective ethnic creedal groups in their own historical space-time. This spatio-temporal generation gap has made for acute ideological conflicts between the ethnic groups of the same origin. Thus the metaphors of the Semitic religions have turned out to be a source of more acute ideological conflict among them than the metaphors of non-Semitic religions.<sup>19</sup> As they were vying with one another with their metaphors, they judged the orthodoxy of one group as the heterodoxy of another. Each made its own metaphor the dogmatic criterion to judge the subscribers of other metaphors. Though it looked like the big fish trying to swallow the small, the battle of metaphors had spiritually opened ethnic groups to one another without limiting ethnic belonging to bodily birth in it. Even so, this was a unilateral perspective of ideological superiority. Saul of Tarsus, with his experiential reflection-based abundance of biblical metaphors, turned out to be a convincing second founder of Christianity in the cultural melting pot of the early Roman Empire. But the founding metaphor of the promised land of the children of Abraham has continued to make a competitively violent history among the bodily and spiritual descendants of Abraham. This violence is reflected even in the core rituals of the Semitic religions.

### **Violence veiled in the core Semitic Rituals<sup>20</sup>**

Religions began revolving around their ritual core before they moved on metaphorically to narrate their violent ethnic origins as distinct identities. I would illustrate this thesis with a pair of mutually corresponding and reminiscent rituals from Jewish and Christian histories. The two selected rituals are the Jewish Passover and the Christian observance of the Lord's Supper. Both rituals are memorial celebrations of the birth of new ethnic identities in the metaphorical labor pains of the parenting individual or collective identity. Let me briefly describe each of these memorials one after the other.

The Jewish ritual observance of the Passover relates to the liberation of the innumerable descendants of the twelve sons of Israel from slavery to the Pharaoh of Egypt. The biblical book of Exodus narrates the liberation as an act of powerful divine intervention in their history, involving the mediation of Moses and Aaron. The intervention is described in terms of variously painful signs, performed by Moses, which the Pharaoh did not heed, until the final striking dead of all the first-born of Egypt. Immediately after this, the Pharaoh relented and permitted Moses to lead the children of

Israel away from Egypt. This is the narrated paschal or Passover event. But the biblical text locates this final event of the striking dead within the context of a ritual.

The ritual was to be a meal made of unleavened bread and the roasted meat of an adult male sheep or goat, which had to be killed and its blood smeared on the doorposts of the houses of the enslaved children of Israel in Egypt. The secret of the blood smear was as a sign for Yahweh to pass over the houses of Israel, to strike only the first-born of the children of the Egyptian households in the dead of that very night. God could not really need any such signs to differentiate the Egyptian households from those of the Israelis. Hence the Lord's passing over the houses of Israel most probably signifies a conspiratorial deed of terror, secretly hatched by the Israelis under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. The precedence of the bloody ritual, giving clear symbolic indication of the violence which was to follow on the Egyptians, confirms the theory of the Israeli conspiracy. The significant message of the paschal ritual, then, was that the birth of Israel as a free nation was achieved by shedding the blood of the non-Israeli aliens and that it could only be maintained at the same cost. Therefore, the annual observance of the paschal festival, which Moses commanded in God's name, must signify Israel's collective faith in and commitment to human violence as God's own deed of revenge on their national enemies.

The Christian observance of the Lord's Supper, on its part, has been located within the ritual context of the Jewish Passover. Yet it marks a further advance on and a reversal of the meaning of the principal Jewish ritual. The significant parallel advance is in its marking the exodus-birth of the Christian identity from its parental Jewish community. The equally significant reversal is along two or even three directions. The first reversal is that the birth of Christianity did not implicate the death or destruction of Judaism, but only its inward conversion in repentance for the death it had inflicted on Jesus. It was the Jews who persecuted and killed the founder and followers of Christianity. Unlike Judaism, Christianity was born in violence endured without retaliation. Jewish history had been made with the maximal violent use and need for the innocent scapegoat mechanism.

Secondly, the Lord's Supper narratively reversed the need for such violence as was inculcated by the ritual of the Jewish Passover. The reversal positively consisted in its inculcation of forgiveness and reconciliation. This was the meaning and purpose of the ritual-meal commemoration of the violent death of Jesus at the hands of his fellow Jews. We saw that uncompromising hatred and destruction of the enemy were the implicit message of Moses' command to keep the

Paschal ritual in perpetuity. The purpose of the new commandment of Jesus to remember his death in a parallel ritual meal was to reverse that violence and inculcate in his disciples his own mindset and disposition of love, forgiveness and reconciliation to enemies and persecutors in non-retaliation. Rather than repeating his parental Jewish history, Jesus reversed it by identifying himself with the first-born of the Egyptians, whose victimal scapegoat-like sacrificial death won Israel's birth into a free nation. The third level of reversal of and violence-reduction from the Jewish Passover in the ritual of the Lord's Supper consisted in substituting vegetarian food products of bread and wine to symbolize the victimized human scapegoat. But Christian history has not remained true to the mind and heart of Jesus.

### **The Metaphor of the Little Flock turned into Kingdom<sup>21</sup>**

In 12: 32 of his gospel, Luke reports Jesus conferring on the church he had founded a new metaphorical identity. The cited text first comparatively identifies the church with a little flock, but moves on immediately to change it into a kingdom, which it qualifies with the definite article. I think that the significance of this twofold metaphorical transformation is in terms of the continuity of the church with the history of Israel. But in the first place the dual metaphor succinctly recalls the history of Israel as a nomadic pastoral people turning into a settled kingdom. If the metaphor pointed to Israel's historical continuity in the church, the allusively implied prophetic irony of that continuity is that the church could also face the same tragic fate as Israel eventually did.

If the saying of Jesus in the gospel was a promise or midrashic prophecy, which awaited its realization, *the Acts of the Apostles* serves as the demonstration of its fulfillment. Luke's *Acts* depicts this growth of the sect into a church and virtual kingdom through a well-blended narrative array of facts and imaginative metaphors. The latter include the implicit Pentecostal metaphor of the abundant harvest from the one seed sown,<sup>22</sup> and the mixed metaphor of the stone rejected by the builders becoming the corner stone of the edifice under construction,<sup>23</sup> which is indicative of the conflict in which Christianity was born. The arrayed facts on the other hand are: the idealistically rigorous communist life-style of the first Christians,<sup>24</sup> the signs and wonders which accompanied the apostles' teaching,<sup>25</sup> the atmosphere of prayer<sup>26</sup> of faith, in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit were poured out<sup>27</sup> and the workings of angels witnessed to<sup>28</sup> and persecutions endured<sup>29</sup> and contextually appropriate missionary strategies evolved.<sup>30</sup>



Our examination of the metaphor of the little flock becoming kingdom, together with the accompanying subsidiary metaphors in the *Acts*, exposes the violently closed and subjective nature of identity-language,<sup>31</sup> which mirrors and is relative to its time and context. It indicates that the truth, which the language bears, is also relative to the space and time of its expressive origin. The language of a threatened minority becomes different when it feels itself growing into a progressively self-confident majority. But neither as minority nor as majority are ethnic identities explicitly conscious of the ideology veiled in their speech acts. Hence they tend to negate it even when it is pointed out. Therefore, we find this problem afflicting every ethnic theology.

### **Theologies as Metaphors of Conflicting Ethnic Identities**

In their implicit narrative reference to their originating contexts, ethnic metaphors cannot help moving in their vicious circles. The circles run more mystifyingly dark when invisible God is ushered into them. But this is what every ethno-religious theology does. It is subjectively particularistic and exclusive in making its claims on God. It is not satisfied unless and until it can negate about others what it affirms its God as doing to its unique ethnic self. The jealousy between man and wife within the marital institution is extended to God and ethnic groups, who are mimetically jealous rivals to one another. Since they proudly look upon themselves as the faithfully adoring partners of God, they cannot help seeing the others as the worshipping partners of Satan. As they use God to affirm their own identity, they have to invent a dualistically opposite principle to nickname the others. Theology, therefore, ends up by becoming a competing ethno-political ideology rather than the universal queen of all sciences.

Thus animism, pantheism, polytheism, monotheism and incarnationism are not merely diversified theologies. They are also metaphorical mirrors of conflicting ideological states of the respective society's political belief, practice or evolution.<sup>32</sup> Trinity and Christology also are metaphorical mirrors of politicized religiosity with a difference. The difference is that they work in favor of equalitarianism in every form of human essence, power and freedom. It was probably such a state of things, which Jesus renamed as the kingdom, which it had pleased the Father to give unto the little flock of his disciples.<sup>33</sup>

The conflict of theologized metaphors might get resolved if we learnt, instead of blindly swearing by them, rationally to relate them to their originating cultural-historical contexts. The rational experiential ground for such a suggestion is that all contexts share

something analogically in common, which makes it possible to translate one cultural metaphor in terms of another. In such a perspective, the dogmatic Christian metaphor of the bodily resurrection, for instance, can be tolerantly and more widely understood as an analogue of what other faiths refer to as the spiritual immortality of the soul, because analogues are mere contraries, without being contradictory. Another culture may represent it with a different metaphor or analogy like rebirth in a new body. Some cultures have tended dogmatically to close such metaphors to their contraries, because of their ulterior intensions of domination over them.<sup>34</sup>

In this light, it is possible empirically to see the church as the analogous Christian metaphor for the ubiquitous community of love, in which all humans are to find their salvation. The locus of salvation, therefore, cannot be confined to the limits of the institutional church. But the church has historically tended to claim itself as the solitary locus of salvation. Such other-negating thought-pattern is a methodological time bomb, which in due course loses its metaphorical sense and takes literally to eliminating other metaphors as heresies. Such is the violence of sacralised dualism, which has no scope for third alternatives.

### **The Violent Dualism of Saints and Sinners<sup>35</sup>**

Unmediated dualism is a sign of loss of the sense of analogy in language and reality. One clear manifestation of it in ethno-religious circles is the dualistic categorization of people into saints and sinners. The point I wish to drive home is that such dualisms in the conceptual violence, which manifests itself in self-righteously exaggerated attitudes and behavior patterns towards the two opposite categories. It may be pointed out for Christian readers that, as the gospels reveal him, Jesus did not make such a division of people in his life time, but mingled equally among the reputedly holy and the infamously sinful alike.

But who are the saints and sinners, anyway? Sociologically speaking, saints are those of its members, whom their society honors and is proud to own as holy role models for the rest of its members. Conversely, sinners are those members, whom their society tends to disown or disapprove as offenders against its code of honor. Honoring some as saints and dishonoring others as sinners thus become two mutually opposite ways of continuous social legitimizing of the group's honor code. The socially constructed honor code or law then becomes the mediating criterion to separate the saints from sinners.

Dogmatic teacher-dominant religions socialize their individual

believers through such desire of honor or fear of dishonor in this world and the next. Civil societies perform the same tasks in terms of legally ordained earthly rights and sanctions. Projected security and self-interest in time and beyond, then, serve as the motivation for the presumed medial right conduct. It is, therefore questionable if acts based on such self-interested desire or fear can be judged morally free. Besides, as saints and sinners are relative to perspective-based judgments of the time and society, total consensus is rarely possible. A person condemned as a sinner by one societal reference could be judged a saint by another. Even Moses and Jesus were ambiguous in this status. Moses was a rebel to the Pharaoh and a hero to the later Israelis. Jesus likewise was a blasphemer to the orthodox Jews and the begotten son of God to orthodox Christians. Something analogous could be said about the founder of every great religion of the world. To every self-perpetuating social system, conformists are saints and dissenters are sinners. And the law of the system becomes the form of its structural violence. But it goes undetected because religion is daintily robed in the charming metaphors of metaphysical poetry.

### **Can we do without Religious Metaphors?**

Cannot history be made without mimetic repetition?<sup>36</sup> On the one hand, an end to other-imitative rivalry seems to demand an end to remembrance and repeated narrations. On the other hand, in so far as metaphors are congealed memories of the past, they seem to render narration and imitative repetition inevitable to history-making. As metaphor is inseparable from the narrative-descriptive structure of communicative language, mimetic violence seems inevitable to history-making.<sup>37</sup> If we must avoid or overcome such violence, it seems that we must do without metaphors, which effective narration demands. To complicate the problem, it logically implies that, as religion is the metaphorically mythologized narration of history, religion as such must cease to exist.<sup>38</sup> Is this not shocking? What is the really implied meaning and solution?

In the dogmatic way in which they are taught or preached, religions seem to be no more nor less than the authority of the preachers and teachers, imposed in psychic violation of individual members' freedom of thought, belief and their on-going test in behavior patterns. On the basis of beliefs or values, formed from their past, religions close access to new knowledge and values, which could be arrived at through suitable tests. To do so effectively, they impose in God's name social closure on or exclusion of people of different patterns of ethno-ethical belief and conduct. In other words,

old metaphors of knowledge oppose and exclude the new. Those who exercise authority in the name of the old metaphors oppose the new as shaking the base of their power. They forget that their own religions were exponentially experimental at their very origin.

In any case, the real implication of doing without metaphors is, as his disciples tell Jesus in John 16:25-29, to teach and preach by action and example rather than with dogmatically threatening verbal commands. That was the exemplarily loving, forgiving and reconciling way and authority of Jesus' teaching. When so practiced, religion would not be seen in opposition to the so-called secular State or culture, but as identical with the observance of all those civil laws, in which the free will and enlightened knowledge of the people rather than the proverbial wisdom of any tyrant decide upon the common good. It is curiously significant that, while describing the New Jerusalem descending from heaven, John states in Rev. 21: 22 that he found in it no temple. The explanatory reason he gives for it is that God and the Lamb are its temple. This probably means that the new secular city, in which voluntary personal sacrifices are joyfully and lovingly made for the common good, is already the substantive city and temple of God, which, therefore, need symbolic or metaphorical temples no more.

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# Non-Violent Agrarian Mobilisation in 20th Century Bihar: Constraints and Beyond

*B.N. Prasad*

## **The Interface of the Kisan Sabha and other Political Parties**

IN THE COLONIAL India, the dominant form of agrarian struggle was launched by the Kisan Sabha. The organisation came into existence in 1927 at Bihta in west Patna district of Bihar, acquired all-Bihar status in 1929 (B.P.K.S.), and all-India body by 1936 (A.I.K.S.). Swami Sahajanand Saraswati emerged as an undisputed leader of the Sabha. The permanent settlement and its consequences created fertile ground, and the tenants provided explosive manpower which was channelised by the Kisan Sabha. The ideological basis of the permanent settlement was highly capitalist of the *laissez-faire* sort.<sup>1</sup> This created contradiction when it came in contact with primitive agrarian social structure. This gave rise to numerous agrarian movements in Bihar in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. But these movements were largely unorganised and sporadic.<sup>2</sup> It was in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that such resistance articulated itself in the form of organised and sustained movement under the modern leadership of Kisan Sabha. Gandhi launched the first non-cooperation movement in 1921, after two successful experiments with the peasant question—Champaran Satyagraha<sup>3</sup> and Khera,<sup>4</sup> Gujarat. Although Gandhi withdrew the non-cooperation movement after *Chauri Chaura* incident in U.P. But the movement exposed the revolutionary potential of the Indian peasantry. This attracted the peasant leader swami Sahajanand.

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (B.P.K.S.) from its inception was

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deeply involved in mass movement. Its very founding in 1929 was marked by the dropping of the proposed tenancy amendment, which proved to be a tremendous moral-booster for tenants. From the very beginning, Sahajanand and his associates not only tried to raise consciousness of the tenants,<sup>5</sup> but also urged them to resist zamindari oppression and fight for their rights. As a result, there were many demonstrations, rallies, satyagraha, and other struggles. Some of the famous struggles of the BPKS, during this period, were the agitation it launched against the Tenancy Bill in 1933, the joint peasant-worker action it undertook against Dalmia Sugar Factory at Bihta in 1938-39, the Bakasht movement<sup>6</sup> in Barahiya tal, Majiawana and Amwari during 1936-38.<sup>7</sup> The movement was directed mainly against zamindari oppressions. The most legendary peasant struggle under the BPKS was the 'Bakasht Movement' and 'Dalmia Sugar Mill Movement' at Bihta.<sup>8</sup> If the former gave evidence of the class action by different sections of the Bihar peasantry, then the latter struggle was the symbol of worker-peasant unity, which opened the eyes of Sahajanand and his associates to the need for worker-peasant unity.<sup>9</sup> It gave an ideological direction to the hitherto spontaneous and sporadic character of peasant movements.

However, the Kisan Sabha passed through different stages in the course of its struggle from spontaneous, sporadic and unorganised peasant movement to well organised and ideologically oriented movement. During its initial stage, its approach was sort of "class collaborationist."<sup>10</sup> Soon this thinking got changed, when the Kisan Sabha came in direct confrontation with the landlords. It was realised by Sahajanand that the agrarian problem could not be solved without solving the problems of the agricultural labourers. He asserted that due to depeasantisation it was difficult to draw a line between the poor peasants and the agricultural labourers. Thus, it was proper to regard agricultural labourers as *Kisan* too so that both might struggle together. But confusion persisted among its leaders. Even leaders like Rahul Sankrityayana argued, "even if agricultural labourers remain labourers, their wage will only go up if the income of the Kisan increases... , I feel that it will be a serious mistake on their part if they enter into quarrel with the Kisans just now."<sup>11</sup> Later it was realised by Sahajanand that the Kisan Sabha was being used by the middle and big cultivators for their own selfish ends.<sup>12</sup> However, the Kisan Sabha, by and large, did not take note of the contradiction that existed between *Kisans* (shudra peasants) and *Mazdurs* (dalit field servants). The movement was essentially centred around Kisan's anti-zamindari struggle. Demand was 'land to the tenants' rather than 'land to the tillers.' This limitation was not properly recognised by



the Kisan Sabha leaders. They assumed that 'anti-zamindari' was equivalent to 'land to the tiller.' There were 'tillers', i.e., *Mazdurs*, who were not tenants. They did not stand to benefit from the abolition of zamindari.<sup>13</sup> There were neither any significant struggle to give land to *all* the tillers, nor struggle to abolish the system which maintained a class of agricultural labourers in permanent existence.

However, due to its narrow end and partial demand, the Kisan Sabha sank into stagnation after zamindari abolition. AIKS sessions were marked by 'poor attendance' and the Sabha became 'tame or inert in a number of states after 1966.'<sup>14</sup>

### Role Played by Other Political Parties

Although many parties were formed to guard the interest of the rural poor—beginning from *Kisan Sabha*, to the *Khet Mazdur Union* led by the CPI, the Bihar Provincial *Khet Mazdur Sabha* by Jagjiwan Ram, the *Khet Mazdur Panchayat* by the Socialists, All India *Khetihar Mazdur Sangha* by the Congress, *Sarvodaya* movement etc., yet they all failed to redress the basic economic hardships of the agrarian poor. However, Vinoba Bhave's *Bhoodan* was to be the *Sarvodaya* answer to the Communist challenge on the land problem and was meant to achieve what legislative actions could not do. Although *Bhoodan-Gramdan* movement generated a social awareness about agrarian issue in India, but in terms of its announced aims the movement was an abortive experiment.<sup>15</sup> Even the Indian Communists rarely accorded sufficient weight to the poor peasants and landless labourers in their organizational strategy and revolutionary mobilization. A.K. Gopalan, veteran peasant leader of CPM emphasized: "We have to make the landless labourers the hub of our activities. Reluctance to take up their specific demands, *fearing that this will drive the rich and middle peasants away from us, will have to be given up...*"<sup>16</sup> The CPI also stressed somewhat similar unity strategy.<sup>17</sup> Thus, all political parties—Congress, Socialist, Communists; shared a common predilection, i.e., making the widest possible social constituency. This may be the logical corollary of involvement in electoral politics, where political expediency is the primary motive rather than the ideological commitment.<sup>18</sup> However; it is this violent reality of the country side that the radical ideology and movement found propitious grounds in late sixties and early seventies.<sup>19</sup>

In the post-colonial era, struggle of the dalit labourers (*mazdur*) have intensified through out India since 1966-67, which are different from earlier kisan's anti-zamindari struggle. The demands of this new struggle are those that have been the demands of the *mazdur* movement from the beginning—demand for statutory minimum

wages, end of bonded, forced labour and all forms of *vethbegar*, redistribution of excess land and *gair mazarua khas* land, *izzat* (prestige) of rural poor, etc. The minuscule peasant revolt in Naxalbari (1967) was a pointer to the fact that, neither the Sarvodaya approach nor the legislative process (in which communists had begun to participate after abandoning the tactic of armed struggle) had solved the agrarian problem. There have been many Naxalbaris since. These struggles not only reject the parliamentary system, but also use extra-constitutional means to achieve the people's democratic revolution through people's war linked to an agrarian programme.<sup>20</sup> In short; it seeks change beyond the institutional framework.

Actually, the Maoist perspective in the Indian communist movement began with the Telangana struggle. Over twenty years later, the re-emergence of the Maoist trend in the 'Naxalbari', *albeit* in changed context, marks the return of the "Telangana line". Naxalite sparks in West Bengal prepared propitious ground for agrarian radicalism in Bihar as well. The struggle heavily depends upon the revolutionary potential of the peasantry. The movement not only rejects the present day 'bourgeois democracy', but also challenges the ideological basis of the parliamentary left in India. The aim of the movement is 'area-wise seizure of power' and setting upon 'Village Soviets'.<sup>21</sup>

### Radical Agrarian Movement in Bihar

With the rise of Naxalbari movement in the spring and summer of 1967, the radical struggles started taking place in Bihar and other parts of India also.<sup>22</sup> The Communist revolutionaries extended their sway in north Bihar and Chotanagpur<sup>23</sup> region, under the guidance of AICCR. Under the banner of Kisan Sangram Samiti (KSS), the first Maoist action was reported at Gangapur in Musahari block of Muzaffarpur district in April 1968.<sup>24</sup> This was followed by a phase of intense organizational activities and preparation for future armed struggles. By 1970, most of the districts of north Bihar and Chotanagpur were under the influence of Maoist movement.<sup>25</sup> But the revolutionary 'rank-and-file' of CPI (ML) failed to create long-term dent in the northern and the plateau regions of the state. The struggle could not move beyond the stage of individual annihilation. Mobilization of toiling masses and transforming them into a people's militia, etc., remained unfulfilled. The first phase (1967-72) of the movement petered out by 1972, under the mighty repressive force of the Indian state. Although, first phase of the struggle came to an early end, but it prepared propitious ground for agrarian radicalism in central Bihar.

## Second Phase

The spread of Maoist activities in central Bihar<sup>26</sup> came at a time when in other areas it was ebbing. Bhojpur started sending green signals to Naxalism as early as 1972. In May 1973, a bitter peasant-police encounter at *Chauri* village of the district caught headlines of the Bihar press.<sup>27</sup> Later Bhojpur emerged as 'Naxalbari' of Bihar in the current phase. It was reported that by 1975, 9 out of 16 blocks of the district were deeply penetrated by Naxalites.<sup>28</sup>

After the proclamation of National Emergency, the military and para-military forces were given *carte blanche* to quell the insurgency. The state forces launched a massive onslaught named 'Operation Thunder' in May 1976. Most of the first crop of local leaders were killed. On the other hand, well-knit landlord syndicates emerged in the area, which terrorized peasants into submission and thereby, cut off potential source of recruits for the movement. The struggle lost much of its momentum by the end of 1976. This phase has been recognized as one of the most protracted militant periods of the peasant movements in the history of modern Bihar.

In the post-emergency period, the central Bihar region saw veritable upheaval of the peasantry. The famous JP movement contributed substantially in the process. Due to utter failure of the "Total Revolution", the Maoist movement attracted a large number of the middle class youth, who were the backbone of the 1974 movement. Many of them are today important functionaries of the radical parties and their mass organizations. This helped the Maoist movement to attain a new height in the region.<sup>29</sup> This is also evident from the fact that, the central Bihar saw the emergence of a host of mass organizations – BPKS, IPF, MKSS, Jan Kalyan Samities, etc., during 1977-80. With these initiatives the movement renewed its vigour and vitality, and by 1981-82, the movement took 26 out of 38 districts of Bihar under its fold, with different degrees of intensity. The movement engulfed 52 blocks of the state, out of which 41 are located in the 7 contiguous districts of central Bihar.<sup>30</sup> The intensity and magnitude of the movement transformed the region into 'The Flaming Fields of Bihar.'

However, central Bihar districts have performed little better in terms of socio-economic development, as compared to other two regions of the state— North Bihar and Chotanagpur. Green revolution made its partial impact and agriculture is progressively market-oriented here. Rate of literacy and scheduled caste population is higher in the region. Urbanization is also pronounced.<sup>31</sup> Apparently this produces a paradoxical situation in the sense that, central Bihar

instead of experiencing relative social tranquillity is frequently convulsed with agrarian struggles, inspired by the Maoist ideology, for economic and social emancipation. The above socio-economic characteristics, *vis-à-vis*, the protracted Maoist movement in the region bring to focus many significant sociological factors to be explored.

### **Agrarian Social Transformation and Roots of the Movement**

Some social scientists opine that the movement is a fall out of capitalist transformation of agriculture and economic exploitation; while others assign primacy to the role of social oppression.<sup>32</sup> Some other opinions are that, the history of exploitation and oppression in the region is rooted in the nature of history and cultural factors.<sup>33</sup> But, development of a social phenomenon does not follow a unilateral track. The radical movement in the region could be the result of a combination of all the above factors.

### **Cultural History of the Region**

Central Bihar has been the crucial region of the state because of its geographical location. This area has traditionally served as the link between the southern and northern parts of the state. Historically, it was the political centre of at least two mighty empires— Mauryas and Guptas. Even in the absence of any imperial power, this region was often subjected to aggression and conquest for the control of southern minerals and northern granary of Bihar.<sup>34</sup> Further, this area has also in the past been the site of a number of wars.<sup>35</sup>

The Grand Trunk Road, which crosses central Bihar plain from one end to another, was the only land route *via* Bihar for the movement of the army from Delhi to Bengal. This exposed the people to violence and turbulence. No other region of the state has suffered as much from violence as this area. Thus, violence has become a significant mark of the very style of life here for a long time. Hundreds of folklores, still preserved, narrate some of these conflicts between exploiter and the exploited.<sup>36</sup> The contemporary rural society of central Bihar may have inherited some of this in its psyche. However, in contrast to 'soft culture' of north Bihar,<sup>37</sup> central Bihar has a distinct 'brassness' about it.<sup>38</sup> Further, central Bihar districts have long been recruitment centre for army and police. This phenomenon probably has led to exaggerated notions of physical powers, 'manhood and machismo' in the region.<sup>39</sup> Thus, it may be argued that rural violence and lumpen brassness in central Bihar is also associated with its cultural profile.

### Socio-Cultural Factors

As stated earlier, some authors view the role of social oppressions as the factor to analyse the agrarian radicalism in central Bihar. However, social humiliation and exploitation is quite widespread and acute in this region than in north Bihar. Dignity of the dalits is continuously threatened. They are considered as 'objects' who are outside the 'civilized order' and whose life ought to be controlled by the landed gentry both on the field and off it. Till yesterday, dalits wearing a clean *dhoti* or a watch, play radio, sitting on a cot in front of upper caste, living in *pucca* house, can provoke animosity and perceived as threat to the feudal domination. Abduction, rape and often sexual abuse of dalit womenfolk are privileged way of social interaction. Feudal norms legitimize social custom like *Dola*, which make obligatory to the dalit brides to spend their wedding night with the local *malik*.<sup>40</sup> Rape was so widespread in the village Nema of Poon Poon block in Patna districts that, it had become difficult to marry off girls of the village.<sup>41</sup> Sahajanand described a similar situation in Masaurha, Patna district, in 1920s.<sup>42</sup>

Two-thirds of the female rural total workers in central Bihar work as agricultural labourers. Their proportion is considerably higher than the male counter parts. Thus, success of any agrarian struggle in the region depends upon the ability to mobilize female workers. It is argued that, one of the main reasons for emergence of Maoist movement in central Bihar is erosion of dignity of the labouring poor.<sup>43</sup> Further, restoration of dignity of female agricultural labourers is one of the central issues of political agenda of all the radical parties in the area. All the militant organizations could get a foot hold among the masses in central Bihar, principally on the question of social exploitation.<sup>44</sup>

However, some social scientists assign primacy to capitalist transformation of agriculture and subsequent development, for emergence and sustenance of the Maoist movement in central Bihar. Now let us focus upon the economic change and its impact on the movement.

### Economic Root of the Movement

Government measures for agrarian modernization have produced high expectations. The capitalist transformation of agriculture started paying some initial dividends.<sup>45</sup> But soon limitations of these strategies were revealed. Better off sections of the rural society benefited and disparity became even more visible.<sup>46</sup> These modernization programmes have been critically described as "betting

on the strong."<sup>47</sup> It had negligible 'trickle down' effects and did not succeed in uplifting rural community as a whole. But because of initial set of expectations, pace of peasant movements slowed down. By the middle of 1960s, growing and obvious polarization of forces among rich and poor formed propitious ground for the resurgence of peasant militancy. The demand for reform was described and perceived as an explosive force. To tackle the growing radicalism government responded on three fronts:

1. Developmental measures to encourage capitalist economy, in which peasants and rural workers were incorporated as producers and consumers.
2. Land reform and tenancy laws were designed to defuse the growing militancy in primary sector and buy some time.
3. Arming and strengthening police and state forces to quell the rebellion.

Now let us analyze the situation in some detail.

### **Package Programme**

During Third Five Year Plan, government launched Intensive Agriculture District Programme (IADP), also known as "Package Programme", in Sahabad (now Bhojpur, Rohtas, Buxar and Kaimur districts). Programme was designed to give technological thrust to agricultural productivity. Bhojpur was selected for AIDP because of its widespread access to irrigation. Total irrigated area in Bhojpur is 68 per cent as against 36 per cent in Bihar as a whole.<sup>48</sup> Measures had been taken to modernize agriculture of the district through construction of the well known "Sone Canal" system in late 19th century.<sup>49</sup>

Although, agriculture was considerably modernized and commercialized, due to the effective control the upper caste landlords had on land, *Junker* model of 'capitalism from above' resulted. Along with 'junkerisation', there was a tendency towards 'capitalism from below' by tenant-cultivators, largely backward castes—Koeri, Kurmi and Yadava. On the other side, commercialization of agriculture also led to increasing differentiation among peasantry and depeasantisation at the lowest levels. Some of these displaced peasants were absorbed in the primary sector as 'attached' and free wage labourers, but many of them were forced into the process of external proletarianisation for livelihood outside Bhojpur. Large proportion of them was recruited in defence and police force. Modern exposure of outer world led to not only self-confidence among the lower caste people, but also sense of dignity and self identity. This phenomenon

has resultant impact on the rise and growth of radical agrarian movement in this region. Further, IADP had been introduced in only 50 per cent irrigated blocks of the districts. The crucible of radicalism had emerged in the most productive regions of Bhojpur districts, i.e. Sahar, Sandesh, Piro and Jagdishpur, partly because of the forces let loose and those held on lease by the changing economic currents released by IADP. On the contrary, those areas with low percentage of irrigated lands and less impact of IADP have witnessed a counter phenomenon. The rural population in these relatively less prosperous areas has not been responsive to radical politics.<sup>50</sup>

In contrast to north Bihar, central Bihar region has high soil fertility.<sup>51</sup> Natural fertility of soil and assured irrigation is a distinctive feature of central Bihar plains. The major part of irrigated areas in Bihar are former central Bihar districts, Sahabad, Gaya and Patna in particular, followed by Bhagalpur and Munger (south Bhagalpur and south Munger form part of central Bihar). As far back in 1929-33, these five districts together accounted for 71 per cent of total irrigated area of the state.<sup>52</sup> This region remained the most irrigated area of Bihar in the post-independence period as well. However, all districts of central Bihar were not under IADP initially, but because of natural fertility and assured irrigation in all these districts, seed-fertilizer technology was extended to other areas subsequently. Resultant effect was however similar— increased productivity, high marketable surplus and polarization of agrarian classes.

Central Bihar region is more urbanized than north Bihar plains. Relative urbanization, modernization and market oriented agriculture weakened the traditional 'patron-client' relationship, which is now gradually being replaced by contractual relationship, between employers and employees. According to Roniger, 'patron-client' relationship "is associated with a low level of mechanization, technological capital investment, the existence of few credit facilities and a low degree of development of communication."<sup>53</sup> It is "deemed to disappear or become marginal with development."<sup>54</sup> However in the traditional set-up, *mazdur* was organically linked with his *malik* through many economic and extra-economic ties, which were one of the strengths of feudal domination and maintenance of the system.<sup>55</sup> Now in the absence of any extra-economic obligations, *mazdur* are not ready to accept their hitherto sub-ordinate position and often rebel against feudal forms of exploitation. The fact that, new landed class in central Bihar is not the old feudal lords is an important point to bear in mind. But the new landed elite still wish to emulate the life style of old feudal landlords, and have strong feudal ethos at cognitive

level.<sup>56</sup> In doing so, they have often been ruthless in the exercise of their new power and have been brutally excessive in perpetuating social oppression. This has created greater rancour and friction in the region. These contradictory trends have obvious impact on the rise and sustenance of the Maoist movement. It is pertinent to note that most of the cadres of contemporary radical movement are drawn from the ranks of agricultural labourers, belonging to scheduled caste and backward castes. They remain committed to the Naxalite ideology because of the background of psychological coercion and economic deprivation.<sup>57</sup> Thus, one can conclude that neither cultural history of the region, nor social oppression or economic transformation alone can explain the prolonged radical agrarian struggle in the region. There is bundle of factors, to be taken together, which can explain the phenomenon.

However, the radical agrarian movements revolve around certain fundamental issues—statutory minimum wages, redistribution of excess land and *gair mazarua khas* land, *izzat* (prestige) of rural poor, and their quest to participate in electoral process; for socio-economic and political emancipation of the toiling masses. Indian Constitution, in principle, is committed to the doctrine of socio-economic and political *justice* to every Indian citizen. It is the basic duty of Indian state to preserve and assure the *equality* of opportunity and dignity of every individual, and furthers 'participatory development.' Promotion and protection of these basic rights, especially to the downtrodden section of the society, assures political and social stability and peace of the country. Impartial functioning of the state in these matters is an acid test of its being a just state. Unless the above constitutional promises are practically ensured by the Indian state, Gandhiji's dream project—'Sarvodaya and Antodaya' society can not be established. However, events of world history suggest that people have changed the course of history, through their struggles and that struggles have created people-centred social system and people-oriented developmental model.

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## ARMS & SURVIVAL

*by Radhakrishna and Mahendra Kumar*

There are two different perspectives on the prospects of disarmament: of 'security' and 'survival'. Disarmament negotiations, whether bilateral or multilateral, whether under the United Nations auspices or outside it, have exhibited a great concern for security only, making the whole approach conceptually inadequate and practically unproductive.

Not only the post-war international society is in the process of an extraordinarily rapid transformation in terms of its structure and its aspirations, but problems like those of human well-being and ecology, human rights, and social justice necessitate a holistic approach.

The essays in this volume not only establish once again that the academic analyses can be much more realistic but also reflect a freshness of approach to the whole problem of disarmament.

Disarmament is to be seen as an integral part of a wider process of the socio-economic emancipation of mankind and the evaluation of a new world society. This process can be accelerated only through a people's movement which should be built through a proper programme of education for disarmament. It is the centrality of the theme of survival which contributors to this volume emphasize by following different analytical routes.

The contributors, all eminent men in their field, belong to many nations but they show a remarkable affinity with what may be termed an Indian approach to disarmament.

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## How Nonviolence is Misrepresented

*Brian Martin*

PETER GELDERLOOS IN his book *How Nonviolence Protects the State* claims that nonviolence is ineffective, racist, statist, patriarchal, tactically and strategically inferior, and deluded.<sup>1</sup> His attack on nonviolence is fierce and unrelenting.

To assess Gelderloos' views, I first outline the case for nonviolence and the associated case against violence. This provides a foundation for examining Gelderloos' arguments. I give special attention to his questionable assumption that violence always triumphs over nonviolence. In my judgment, Gelderloos' arguments are based on pervasive double standards. In addition, he fails to spell out what levels and types of violence he considers acceptable, an omission that undermines his argument. Finally, I comment on connections between anarchism and violence/nonviolence.

I am a longstanding supporter of nonviolent action, so it is predictable that I am critical of Gelderloos' arguments. But I also believe critical analysis is valuable. Nonviolent activists can become more effective by subjecting their beliefs to logical scrutiny and empirical testing.

### **The Case for Nonviolent Action**

Through history classes, Hollywood movies and the daily news, most people come to believe two things about violence. One is that groups with a greater capacity for violence — armies, weapons, military industry and ruthlessness — can nearly always win over those with a lesser capacity. This is the assumption behind the question "What

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would you do to stop the Nazis?" asked rhetorically as a presumed refutation of nonviolence.<sup>2</sup> Second, most people believe that violence is a tool, usually a neutral tool. If it is used by bad guys — the enemy, terrorists or criminals — violence is bad, but when used by good guys — "our side" — then it is good. Most supporters of revolutionary warfare accept these assumptions; they believe revolution is a good cause and hope to use armed struggle to achieve it.

Nonviolent action challenges both these assumptions; the successes of nonviolent action challenge the belief that superior violence always succeeds; the characteristics of nonviolent action make it an especially appropriate tool for helping create a nonviolent society.

Mohandas Gandhi was the key figure in creating awareness of nonviolent action as a distinctive approach to social change, principally through campaigns in South Africa beginning in 1906 and then in India from 1915 through the 1940s. Nonviolent action had been used for centuries before Gandhi. For example, Hungarians who opposed domination by Austria used a range of methods of non-cooperation from 1850 to 1867.<sup>3</sup> One of Gandhi's achievements was to put non-violent action on the agenda as a strategic approach.

Gandhi's campaigns had an enormous influence worldwide, leading to the development and diffusion of nonviolent campaigning skills and insights. In many social movements, nonviolent action has become the preferred approach.

Nonviolent action, as a technique of political communication and waging conflict, can be distinguished from conventional action and from violence.

Conventional political action includes voting, lobbying and campaigning — anything that is routine within a society. Conventional economic action includes working, and buying and selling goods and shares. Conventional social action includes meetings of clubs or neighbours, charitable work and much else. Nonviolent action, in contrast, goes beyond routine behaviour, often by challenging conventional practices. Examples include protesters disrupting a government meeting by dressing as clowns, a neighbourhood association setting up an alternative system of social welfare, war resisters refusing to pay taxes, consumer activists blocking service in a bank by opening and closing small accounts, bus drivers refusing to collect fares, office workers sending large files to clog an e-mail system, and communities setting up local currencies.

The boundary between conventional and nonviolent action depends on the circumstances. When government repression is severe, handing out a leaflet might count as nonviolent action, whereas in some places strikes are so common and widely accepted that

participating in one might be considered conventional action.

Violence means physical force used against humans, including imprisonment, beatings, shootings, bombings and torture.<sup>4</sup> Non-violent action excludes these. Sabotage — violence against objects — lies at the boundary between violence and nonviolence.<sup>5</sup>

Nonviolent action thus encompasses a wide range of activities that go beyond conventional, routine action but do not involve physical violence against humans. When people think about nonviolent protests, rallies and sit-ins commonly come to mind, but there are many other sorts, such as workers refusing to tear down an iconic building, judges resigning in protest over political pressure, roads activists digging up streets and planting crops, and office workers misplacing or destroying files on dissidents targeted for surveillance and arrest.

Nonviolent action is *action* — it doesn't include passivity or inaction — and it goes beyond conventional methods of political communication and waging conflict, such as discussion, negotiation or lobbying. Nonviolent action is nonviolent on the part of those who use it. Their opponents can and often do use violence, sometimes brutally.

Nonviolent action can be divided into actions *against* something, such as most strikes and boycotts, and actions *for* something, such as workers organising to produce socially useful products or doing their jobs without bosses. The *against* actions typically target injustices; the *for* actions typically seek to build a better society.

With this picture of nonviolent action, what are the reasons for choosing it rather than conventional action or violence? There are two main traditions, commonly called principled and pragmatic nonviolence.<sup>6</sup> Principled nonviolence is undertaken for moral reasons, namely that it is wrong to use violence. This is the Gandhian tradition. Pragmatic nonviolence is undertaken because it is believed to be more effective than alternatives, in particular more effective than violence.

Principled nonviolent activists refuse to use violence under any circumstances. For example, they refuse to join armies, no matter how worthy the cause. However, many principled nonviolent activists pay close attention to effectiveness: they refuse to use violence, but they choose their tactics carefully.<sup>7</sup> Pragmatic nonviolent activists, on the other hand, often proclaim their commitment to nonviolence, knowing this increases their credibility. So, in practice, there is an overlap of principled and pragmatic rationales.

Here I concentrate on arguments for pragmatic nonviolence because they allow a more direct comparison with Gelderloos' case. Principled nonviolence has its own arguments and criteria which are

important but given less attention here.

Gene Sharp, the most prominent researcher of pragmatic nonviolence, divides the methods of nonviolent action into three types:

- protest and persuasion, such as marches, taunting of officials, protest disrobing and renunciation of honours;
- non-cooperation, including many types of social, political and economic strikes and boycotts;
- intervention, including fasts, sit-ins, occupations, land seizures and alternative institutions.<sup>8</sup>

From a pragmatic perspective, what are the reasons for choosing nonviolent action? In other words, what are the benefits of nonviolent action compared to alternatives? Out of many that could be listed, here are four.

1. Nonviolent action involves withdrawal of support from the system. It is a challenge to the legitimacy of standard behaviours or policies.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, conventional actions, such as voting, implicitly support the system by using its own methods.

2. Nonviolent action usually wins more support than does violence. Nonviolent actions — at least when well chosen — leave open a greater opportunity for communication. Opponents, by not being physically harmed, are accorded a certain respect: implicitly, their health and life are respected. Opponents are less fearful and hence do not have to be as ferocious in defence or attack.

When violence is used against nonviolent protesters, this is widely seen as unjust, and can lead to a major reaction against the violent attackers, a process Sharp calls political jiu-jitsu.<sup>10</sup> This can stimulate protest supporters to become more active, encourage uninvolved third parties to join the side of the protesters and even disgust some opponents of the protesters, causing their loyalty to shift.

3. Nonviolent action allows widespread participation. Women, children, elderly people and people with disabilities can participate in many forms of nonviolent action. This can be a goal in itself.

Much nonviolent action can be organised openly. This allows greater participation than clandestine operations.

Much nonviolent action is empowering for participants, promoting feelings of capability, solidarity and satisfaction.<sup>11</sup> Greater participation means greater empowerment.



4. Nonviolent action as a method is compatible with the goal of a nonviolent society.

Using methods that reflect the goal is called prefiguration: the methods prefigure — in other words, anticipate or replicate in advance — the goal. Prefiguration provides training and experience in what is being sought. It helps create an element of the goal, even if a campaign is unsuccessful. And it helps keep efforts on track.

If the goal is a society without organised violence, nonviolent action has all these prefigurative advantages. It provides experiences in living without using violence; it reduces immediate violence in the here and now, even when campaigns fail; and it ensures that efforts are in a nonviolent direction.

Each of these four points can be applied to violence.

1. Violence involves a withdrawal of consent from the system. In this regard, violence and nonviolence are similar.

2. Violence often alienates potential supporters. Opponents may dig in and resist more strenuously. A psychological perspective called correspondent inference theory helps explain why. People often infer someone else's motivations by looking at the consequences of their actions. If the actions lead to people dying, the inference is that activists are motivated to kill — not to liberate, which might be their actual motivation. This theory helps explain why terrorists' motives are so widely misinterpreted.<sup>12</sup>

Violence targets individuals, but harming individuals is not an effective way to challenge *systems* of oppression. Killing a politician does not undermine the state, because politicians can be replaced, sometimes with ones who are worse. Furthermore, a person who is a politician has other roles, such as parent, friend and musician. Violence, by not discriminating between roles, destroys much that is good, rather than targeting the damaging roles and building on the beneficial ones.<sup>13</sup>

When challengers use violence, this gives greater legitimacy to state violence against them. The jiu-jitsu effect is reduced, even when the state uses far more violence than challengers.

3. Violence restricts participation. Young, fit men predominate in both armies and armed liberation movements. The secrecy accompanying armed struggle also limits participation.

Violence can be empowering for those involved, but limited

participation means the empowerment is restricted.

4. Violence as a method clashes with the goal of a nonviolent society. Using violence gives training, experience and legitimacy to violence. It causes immediate suffering. And it is easier for campaigns to go off track, down a path towards ongoing violence and associated domination.

Points 2, 3 and 4 constitute the core of the case against violence, from a nonviolence point of view.

Note that these arguments for nonviolent action and against violence are tendencies, not universal truths. For example, nonviolent action *usually* wins more support than violence, but not always. Some nonviolent methods allow only limited participation whereas some violent movements have many participants. In adopting nonviolent action from a pragmatic point of view, attention needs to be given to the circumstances.

Many nonviolent campaigns are largely spontaneous, without much preparation, planning or training. No one expects armed movements without weapons, training or plans to be very successful. Considering the vast amounts of money and effort put into military operations, it is reasonable to expect that nonviolent action could become far more effective with more resources.

For those with a principled commitment to nonviolence, the circumstances do not matter; they reject violence, even if assassinating a dictator might reduce the suffering of millions. But there is an important link between pragmatic assessments and principled stands. If, pragmatically, nonviolent action is *usually* a better choice, then it can be (pragmatically) sensible to make a principled commitment, because it reduces the risks of misunderstanding by participants, of being falsely labelled violent by opponents, and of going off track in a violent direction.

### Gelderloos

Gelderloos is an anarchist. He opposes systems based on hierarchy and supports egalitarian social relationships created and maintained by the people involved in them. He is opposed to the state, capitalism, racism and patriarchy. Being opposed to capitalism puts him in the left generally, but as an anarchist he is opposed to the state, including state socialism whether advocated by reformist socialists seeking state power through electoral means or by Marxist-Leninists who want to seize control of the state, most commonly through armed struggle, in order to crush capitalism. Gelderloos wants instead to destroy the

state — and capitalism, racism and patriarchy — so that people can create their own non-hierarchical systems of self-rule.

Gelderloos is an activist and has spent time in prison as a result of protest actions. His passionate commitment to liberation cannot be doubted. But while respecting his vision, dedication and energy, it is possible to criticise his arguments, conclusions and methods.

Rather than take up Gelderloos' claims about nonviolence one by one, it is more illuminating to understand his perspective as stemming from a few key assumptions. At the core of his thinking is the view that nonviolence cannot be successful against violence.

The state, in the conventional sociological conception, is based on a monopoly over the use of legitimate violence. Gelderloos supports revolutionary change including overthrow and dissolution of the state. He believes that leaders of the state will not acquiesce. Hence, he concludes, physical force must be used.

If nonviolent action cannot succeed against violence, then Gelderloos' other conclusions follow.

- Nonviolence is ineffective against oppressive systems backed by violence (pp. 7-22).
- Nonviolence is racist, because it allows racism to persist: "By preaching nonviolence, and abandoning to state repression those who do not listen obediently, white activists who think they are concerned about racism are actually enacting a paternalistic relationship and fulfilling the useful role of pacifying the oppressed." (p. 34).
- Nonviolence is statist, because it protects the state from the only challenge that Gelderloos believes can overthrow it, namely violence: "Put quite plainly, nonviolence ensures a state monopoly on violence." (p. 45).
- Nonviolence is patriarchal, because it prevents women from using a powerful tool — violence — against male domination: "a pacifist practice that forbids the use of any other tactics leaves no option for people who need to protect themselves from violence now." (p. 67).
- Nonviolence is "tactically and strategically inferior": "The struggle against authority will be violent, because authority itself is violent and the inevitable repression is an escalation of that violence. ... Lobbying for social change is a waste of scarce resources for radical movements." (p. 94).
- Nonviolence is deluded about how revolutionary change can occur: "it would be much easier to end the psychological patterns of violence and domination once we had destroyed the social institutions, political bodies, and economic structures specifically constituted to perpetuate coercive domination. But proponents of nonviolence boldly sound the call to retreat, declaring that we should treat the

symptoms while the disease is free to spread itself, defend itself, and vote itself pay raises." (p. 126).

Some of these arguments sound strange. How, for example, can nonviolence be patriarchal when women have been so prominent in nonviolent action whereas armed groups are almost always dominated by men? But Gelderloos' argument has an underlying coherence built on his assumption that nonviolence cannot succeed against violence, which leads to his conclusion that violence is needed to overthrow oppressive systems, including patriarchy: "if a movement is not a threat, it cannot change a system based on centralized coercion and violence" (p. 22). Here, "threat" means the potential to use violence. Because nonviolence, in Gelderloos' eyes, doesn't pose a threat in this sense, he concludes that it is patriarchal.

Therefore, rather than address in detail Gelderloos' claims about racism, patriarchy and the like, it is more useful to tackle his central claim that nonviolence is unable to be effective against violence, especially because this assumption is a common one. So how does Gelderloos support this claim?

He certainly doesn't do it by addressing nonviolence theory: he does not systematically examine it.<sup>14</sup> Gelderloos treats all nonviolence as *principled* nonviolence, thereby missing pragmatic nonviolence. He mentions Gene Sharp only in passing and does not discuss Sharp's theory of power or Sharp's methods and dynamics of nonviolent action. He does not address the key dynamic of political jiu-jitsu, which explains how violence used against nonviolent protesters can be counterproductive.

Nor does Gelderloos examine George Lakey's strategy for nonviolent revolution.<sup>15</sup> In fact, he assumes that nonviolence cannot be revolutionary, for example referring to "nonviolent and revolutionary activists" (p. 83).

Instead, Gelderloos assesses nonviolence by examining a number of nonviolent campaigns. He dismisses every one as not really constituting a success by using a series of arguments, deployed selectively, often with a double standard in relation to violence.

1. Gelderloos' first argument against nonviolent campaigns is to say that they weren't entirely nonviolent. If he can point to evidence of violence in campaigns, he dismisses the contribution of nonviolent action. Referring to 1962 black riots in Georgia and Alabama, Gelderloos concludes "Perhaps the largest of the limited, if not hollow, victories of the civil rights movement came when black people demonstrated they would not remain peaceful forever." (p. 12)

There is a double standard here. In guerrilla struggles and other campaigns involving violence, there is also a great amount of nonviolent action, for example during the Vietnam war, the Iraq war and the second Palestinian Intifada. Why should violence be given all the credit when both violence and nonviolence are used?

2. Gelderloos' second argument against nonviolent campaigns is to say they didn't really change anything. They weren't liberation. They didn't overthrow the state — just the current rulers — and didn't overthrow capitalism. "The liberation movement in India failed. The British were not forced to quit India. Rather, they chose to transfer the territory from direct colonial rule to neocolonial rule." (p. 9)

With this argument, Gelderloos again exhibits a double standard, because he doesn't assess violent campaigns with the same stringent expectations. He refers approvingly to the Black Panthers in the US in the 1960s and 1970s and the anarchist revolutionaries in the Ukraine in the early 1920s, among others, none of which overthrew capitalism or the state. He lauds these initiatives for standing up to the state, for showing what can be accomplished, for striking fear into the heart of rulers and for empowering participants. That is all well and good, but he doesn't give nonviolent campaigns credit for equivalent accomplishments.

Gelderloos doesn't give a single example of an armed struggle leading to the sort of liberated society he espouses. Why not? Undoubtedly because successful armed struggles — such as in China, Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam — have not abolished the state but rather, if anything, strengthened it. Armed struggle encourages militarisation of the movement, making it more hierarchical and authoritarian. These features seldom wither away after revolutionary victories.

3. If a campaign fails, Gelderloos attributes this to the use of nonviolent action and insufficient use of violence. In the 1989 pro-democracy movement in China, "the students who had put themselves in control of the movement refused to arm themselves ..." (pp. 122-123). The double standard here is that Gelderloos does not mention the failure of armed movements in Bolivia, Latvia, Malaya, Philippines, Uruguay and many other countries.

Gelderloos ignores the difference between spontaneous and strategic nonviolent action.<sup>16</sup> Many failed campaigns have relied mainly on spontaneous nonviolent action, without careful planning and training. To dismiss these as failures of nonviolent action as a

method would be like dismissing violence as a method because of the failure of spontaneous rioting.

4. In referring to recent campaigns that unseated governments in Serbia, Ukraine and other countries, Gelderloos says they were "orchestrated" by the US government (p. 100). He doesn't give any evidence for this claim, aside from citing one newspaper story.

It is true that the US government has provided financial assistance to some nonviolent movements, for example Otpor in Serbia, a key resistance group in triggering the mass movement that brought down President Slobodan Milosevic in 2000. The contribution of US government assistance to these movements has been debated, not least among nonviolent activists, some of whom have argued against accepting assistance because of the risk of being accused of being pawns of the US government. Gelderloos addresses none of the complexities of these situations, simply assuming that because the US government was involved, therefore it orchestrated the whole operation.<sup>17</sup>

The double standard in this case is that Gelderloos does not make a similar claim in relation to violent struggles. During the Vietnam war, the National Liberation Front received considerable assistance from the Soviet government. Does this mean the NLF's victory was orchestrated by the Soviet government? Of course, not. The struggle's success depended on the massive support and sacrifice of the Vietnamese people. Exactly the same can be said about nonviolent campaigns that receive US government funding: the campaigns would not stand a chance without popular support.

There is also a double standard in Gelderloos' failure to mention cases in which the US government supported violent resistance. In Afghanistan after the 1979 Soviet invasion, the CIA covertly funded mujahideen opponents. In Kosovo, the US government ignored a decade-long nonviolent struggle<sup>18</sup> and then supported an armed movement, the Kosovo Liberation Army, previously classified as terrorists. By Gelderloos' logic, these armed struggles were orchestrated by the US government and, therefore, the role of violence can be discounted.

5. Gelderloos ignores a great number of nonviolent campaigns, thereby avoiding the need to address their challenge to his argument. His claim about US government orchestration falls down entirely for nonviolent campaigns prior to the 1990s, before which there is no evidence of any US government assistance. In one of many examples,

in 1944 the dictator of El Salvador — a US client state — was toppled in a popular nonviolent campaign.<sup>19</sup>

Gelderloos claims that the nonviolent strategy of generalised disobedience cannot bring power to the people because the state still controls key resources and the loyalty of the military and police: "in recent decades, the only significant military defections have occurred when the military faced violent resistance and the government seemed to be in its death throes." (p. 99). To the contrary, there are quite a few cases in which military defections have occurred without there being much violent resistance, including the Philippines in 1986, various Eastern European countries in 1989, the Soviet Union in 1991, and Serbia in 2000. Gelderloos is right that military defections are essential for revolution,<sup>20</sup> but defections can occur as a result of nonviolent methods such as fraternisation.

### Comparing Violence and Nonviolence

Gelderloos' dismissal of the power of nonviolent action is so one-sided and filled with double standards that it would be easy to miss an important point: there has been very little systematic comparison of the effectiveness of violence and nonviolence.

Making comparisons is complex, because the success of a campaign or movement depends on many factors, including belief systems, human and material resources, social cohesion, political alignments and international factors, in addition to the methods used by activists. The choice of violent or nonviolent methods may tip the balance in some circumstances, but the other factors still need to be considered.<sup>21</sup>

In the vast body of research on social movements, there is little on the effectiveness of violence. In one of the few relevant studies, sociologist William Gamson in his book *The Strategy of Social Protest* analyses 53 US challenging groups between 1800 and 1945. In a chapter titled "The success of the unruly," he assesses outcomes for groups that used violence compared to those that were recipients of violence without fighting back.<sup>22</sup> In this comparison, groups that used violence were far more likely to be successful, namely to gain acceptance and obtain new advantages. However, Gamson is reluctant to attribute success to violence, arguing instead that "it is not the weakness of the user but the weakness of the target that accounts for violence": violence is "as much a symptom of success as a cause."<sup>23</sup>

Gamson does not use the expression "nonviolent action" nor refer to any writings in the area. He does, though, analyse movements' use of "constraints" including strikes, boycotts and denunciation. He finds that movements that used constraints but not violence were

far more likely to be successful than ones that did not use constraints. In effect, he shows that coercive methods of nonviolent action — what Sharp would call methods of non-cooperation and intervention — are associated with success.

Gamson's study, while illuminating, does not directly compare the effectiveness of options for a given movement because, as he well recognises, he is analysing different movements in different circumstances. However, he does give strong backing for the conclusion that a movement being "unruly" is associated with success.<sup>24</sup> Violence and nonviolence are different ways of being unruly.

In 2005, Freedom House published a study of 67 political transitions occurring in countries with authoritarian governments in the period 1973-2000, looking at the level of violence, the source of violence and the forces driving the transitions. Using Freedom House's pre-existing ratings of freedom in the countries before and after the transitions, the authors were able to assess the comparative roles of violence and nonviolence. Their principal findings:

- "First, 'people power' movements matter, because nonviolent civic forces are a major source of pressure for decisive change in most transitions."
- "Second, there is comparatively little positive effect for freedom in 'top-down' transitions that were launched and led by elites."
- "Third, the presence of strong and cohesive nonviolent civic coalitions is the most important of the factors examined in contributing to freedom."
- "Fourth, the data suggests that the prospects for freedom are significantly enhanced when the opposition does not itself use violence."<sup>25</sup>

These conclusions go directly against Gelderloos' claims. Though he might dismiss them because of the politics of Freedom House or because none of the political transitions involved revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the state, nonetheless they undermine his claims about the comparative ineffectiveness of nonviolent action.

In a forthcoming paper, Maria Stephan and Erica Chenoweth analyse data for 323 violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns from 1900 to 2006, concluding that nonviolent campaigns are more likely to achieve strategic objectives. They say, "Nonviolent campaigns are more likely to win legitimacy, attract widespread domestic and international support, neutralize the opponent's security forces, and compel loyalty shifts amongst erstwhile opponent supporters than armed campaigns, which enjoin the active support of a relatively small number of people, offer the opponent a justification for violent



counter-attacks, and are less likely to prompt loyalty shifts and defections.<sup>26</sup> Additional careful studies of campaigns and outcomes are needed because it is so easy to reach a desired conclusion by the choice of a few selected examples.

### Is Challenger Violence Justified?

Gelderloos frequently highlights the violence of the state — “the greatest purveyor of violence” (p. 158) — and other systems of oppression, with the implicit assumption that this justifies violence to destroy these systems. The issue of the legitimacy receives quite a lot of attention in discussions of violence. William T. Vollmann in his mammoth analysis of violence, *Rising Up and Rising Down*, focuses on justifications for and consequences of violence, and includes a detailed moral calculus.<sup>27</sup>

But just because violence might be justified does not mean it is the best option. If someone at a party swears at you, you might be legally and morally justified in suing for slander, but it is seldom a wise idea to do so: it is likely to be very costly and could harm your reputation even more.<sup>28</sup> Similarly for violence: although justified, it might be counterproductive in legitimising counter-violence, reducing participation, and leading down a path towards more violence. This highlights, once again, the importance of careful comparisons of the effectiveness of violence and nonviolence, taking into account both immediate outcomes and longer-term impacts on morale, solidarity and mobilisation.

### Attributions

Gelderloos’ arguments against nonviolent action in part miss the mark because he misconstrues nonviolence and makes claims without evidence. For example:

- “... many pacifists in the US today also believe that if you are rocking the boat or causing conflict, you are doing something wrong” (p. 20).

The only evidence given for this sweeping claim is one email. Note that Gelderloos’ persistent use of the term pacifist is misleading. Historically, many pacifists do not engage in nonviolent action and many nonviolent activists are not pacifists.

- “But pacifists seem not to have given the violence of patriarchy its due consideration.” (p. 66).

Actually, many nonviolent activists are feminists and have worked against male violence.<sup>29</sup>

- "... nonviolence ... glorifies passivity" (p. 67).

This is a common misconception.<sup>30</sup> The terms satyagraha and nonviolent action were developed to supersede the misleading expression "passive resistance."

- "Nonviolence focuses on changing hearts and minds, but it underestimates the culture industry and thought control by the media." (p. 85).

Persuasion is only one of the ways that nonviolence works. Sharp lists dozens of methods of non cooperation and intervention.<sup>31</sup>

- Pacifists "have the option of forswearing confrontation with state power and pretending they are engaged in some process of magically transforming the state through the 'power of love,' or their 'nonviolent witness,' or by disseminating heart-wrenching images of cardboard puppets through the media, or some other swill." (p. 108).

Actually, nonviolent activists have repeatedly confronted state power.<sup>32</sup>

- "nonviolence is deluded in repeating that means determine ends..." (p. 130).

The usual claim is that means influence ends.<sup>33</sup>

- "The pacifist vision of struggle, based on a polar dichotomy between violence and nonviolence, is unrealistic and self-defeating." (p. 139).

Nonviolent activists are well aware of degrees of violence. It is possible to draw a line between violence and nonviolence in theory and practice while recognising different types of actions within each category.

There are many other examples of contentious statements by Gelderloos for which he gives no evidence or cites an email or personal comment but draws conclusions apparently intended to apply to all nonviolent activists. Gelderloos may be correct that some nonviolent activists are — perhaps unconsciously — racist, paternalist or too timid. But this does not mean that nonviolent action, as a method of struggle, has the same characteristics, any more than the racism or other features of violent activists mean that violence is racist.

Gelderloos often uses sources in a selective, misleading fashion. For example, he criticises an article by Carol Flinders about women and nonviolence, incorrectly portraying it as saying women are inherently nonviolent.<sup>34</sup> He cites Martha McCaughey's book *Real Knockouts*, an analysis of the women's self-defence movement, in support of his argument for women's violence against patriarchy, missing the complexity and sophistication of McCaughey's argument.<sup>35</sup>

Gelderloos approvingly quotes (pp. 114-115) Martin Oppenheimer's book *The Urban Guerrilla* concerning shortcomings of nonviolence but omits any mention of Oppenheimer's trenchant criticisms of violence, such as:

- "For the organization of violence, for whatever reason, is basically subversive of democratic values and institutions, and the habit of solving political issues through violent means, far from liberating, imprisons persons and personalities so that truly democratic participation in decision-making become nearly impossible."
- "...the kind of people who become active in insurrections and survive it *tend* not to be the kind of people who will create a positive, humanistic order ... the kind of organization seemingly required to conduct a violent effort is inherently subversive of such an order."
- "...both in terms of personality and organization, violence, far from being therapeutic, endangers when it does not utterly destroy the humanistic component of a social movement."<sup>36</sup>

### Violence: What Sort and How Much?

*How Nonviolence Protects the State* is curiously coy about the actual role violence might play in liberation. Gelderloos explicitly rejects presenting a definition of violence: "... one of the critical arguments of this book is that *violence* cannot be clearly defined." (p. 3). He says that many activists consider everyday activities, such as "buying clothes made in a sweatshop", to be violent and says the concept of violence isn't useful when "no two people can really agree on what it means" (pp. 124-125). However, even though activists may have different conceptions about terms, it's still possible for analysts to agree on meanings.

Gelderloos, by leaving violence ill-defined, is able to avoid spelling out what he sees as the appropriate or inappropriate use of violence in liberation. He prefers to focus on hierarchy as the key to oppression and to say that all means of challenging hierarchy should be considered, without bothering about the difference between violence and nonviolence. He advocates a diversity of tactics, assuming that the more tactics are available to be used, the more effective a

movement can be. Because a commitment to nonviolence means ruling out some tactics, Gelderloos concludes that nonviolence is bound to be less effective than a broader diversity of tactics.

There are a few clues in the text about what sorts of actions Gelderloos is thinking about:

- “fighting cops or engaging in clandestine acts of sabotage” (p. 4);
- “violent protests, bombings, and property destruction” (p. 15)
- “hits a cop or throws a brick through a window” (p. 58)
- “Killing a cop who rapes homeless transgender people and prostitutes, burning down the office of a magazine that consciously markets a beauty standard that leads to anorexia and bulimia, kidnapping the president of a company that conducts women-trafficking” (p. 67)
- “blow up a dioxin-emitting factory that is making your breast milk toxic”; “kill the general who sends out the soldiers who rape women in a war zone” (p. 69)
- “expropriate money to fund and greatly increase the capacities of grassroots media outlets” (p. 90).

The question arises: are there any methods that Gelderloos rejects? Does he reject use of machine guns? Does he reject missiles? Does he reject biological weapons? Does he reject nuclear weapons? Does he reject torture?<sup>37</sup> If Gelderloos rejects any of these methods, perhaps because they are inhumane or counterproductive, then he is drawing a line, accepting that not all methods are acceptable in a diversity of tactics.

One of Gelderloos’ chief complaints is that nonviolent activists are unwilling to support activists who use violence. Is Gelderloos willing to support any activist, even ones who use land mines and chemical weapons? If not, then his strictures against nonviolent activists, who draw a line at a different place, reflect a double standard in his argument.

### **Anarchism and Violence**

Because Gelderloos articulately describes himself as an anarchist, some readers might gain the mistaken impression that he speaks for anarchists generally. Actually, anarchists have long debated and disagreed about the use of violence in bringing about social change. Some anarchists believe violence is warranted and necessary. The most famous armed struggle by anarchists was during the Spanish revolution and civil war from 1936-1939, when workers ran farms and factories and anarchist militias defended the revolution both from Franco’s fascists (backed by Hitler) and from communists.

However, since then anarchist armed struggle has not played a prominent role, though a few anarchists have advocated using guerrilla methods designed for an industrialised country.<sup>38</sup>

There is also a parallel strand within anarchism that opposes use of violence.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, some anarchists are openly committed to nonviolence.<sup>40</sup>

Pragmatically, the prospects for armed liberation within industrialised countries have been minimal for decades. In this context, many anarchists believe that using violence would be futile.<sup>41</sup> Prominent anarchist Murray Bookchin wrote,

The state power we face is too formidable, its armamentarium is too destructive, and, if its structure is still intact, its efficiency is too compelling to be removed by a contest in which weaponry is the determining factor. The system must fall, not fight; and it will fall only when its institutions have been so hollowed out by the new Enlightenment, and its power so undermined physically and morally, that an insurrectionary confrontation will be more symbolic than real.<sup>42</sup>

Another rationale arises out of the anarchist belief in prefiguration, namely that means should reflect ends. If the goal is a world without organised violence, this means avoiding violence in the struggle for such a world. However, anarchists have long debated the application of this principle to the use of violence.<sup>43</sup>

Marxists, in contrast, seldom subscribe to prefiguration. They instead assume that the ends justify the means, most notoriously in capturing state power to smash capitalism, after which the state is supposed to wither away: the ultimate Marxist goal is communism, in which there is no state, the same goal as anarchists. (This is the original meaning of communism, as distinct from the reality of states ruled by Communist parties.) Anarchists in the 1800s argued against Marxists, prophetically warning that capturing state power was a prescription for dictatorial rule.

Gandhi can be considered an anarchist.<sup>44</sup> He opposed the state, proposing instead village democracy. He refused an offer to lead newly independent India, unlike those anarchists who joined the government of Republican Spain in the 1930s.

The goal of anarchists is a society built around non-hierarchical structures organised by the people involved in them — an approach known as self-management — and hence anarchists strive to create non-hierarchical structures in their own organisations and campaigns. They have promoted cooperatives and workers' control as alternatives to capitalist enterprise. They have promoted egalitarian relations

between men and women.

Another point of debate within anarchism is the issue of revolution. Some, like Gelderloos, believe in destruction of capitalism and the state in a mass uprising to bring about self-managed systems. Others point to examples of self-management within today's societies, believing that anarchist practices can grow up in the interstices of existing institutions, eventually supplanting them.<sup>45</sup> If social structures are likened to a forest, then revolution is like cutting down the trees and planting new species, whereas in an evolutionary model, new species grow up between the old, eventually becoming dominant.<sup>46</sup>

Gelderloos gives no hint of debates over violence and revolution within the anarchist movement: for him, anarchism seems to mean his own particular set of beliefs. Nor does he acknowledge the anarchist sensibility that is widespread in nonviolent movements.<sup>47</sup> Many activists are sceptical of the state and other dominant institutions and favour non-hierarchical forms of organisation, even though they are unfamiliar with anarchist writings. They also favour nonviolent action, which may explain why Gelderloos does not give credit to their anarchist sensibility.

### Conclusion

Since the days of Gandhi's campaigns, nonviolent activists have been criticised by supporters of armed struggle.<sup>48</sup> In recent years, the most comprehensive critiques of nonviolence have been by Howard Ryan,<sup>49</sup> Ward Churchill<sup>50</sup> and Gelderloos. Unfortunately, many critiques suffer through inadequate understanding of nonviolence, often due to a failure to engage with writings in the area.<sup>51</sup>

Gelderloos has shown enormous commitment as an activist and great energy in compiling a comprehensive critique of nonviolence. Unfortunately, he has missed his main target: in essence, he attacks principled nonviolence from a perspective in which the ends justify the means. He dismisses nonviolent action campaigns using a set of arguments that display systematic double standards.

Underlying Gelderloos' argument is the assumption that violence is more effective than nonviolence. This is certainly a common assumption, but if a critique of nonviolence is to have any real teeth, the assumption needs to be justified and counterexamples addressed.

Gelderloos shows almost no awareness of the pragmatic tradition in nonviolent action. He misrepresents nonviolent action as consisting solely of protest and persuasion, missing the more coercive methods of non-cooperation and intervention. Furthermore, he ignores a large number of major nonviolent struggles, successful and unsuccessful.

A key omission in Gelderloos' argument is a discussion of limits

in a diversity of tactics: he does not say whether any methods should be ruled out. Almost any activist will agree that some methods should not be used, whether it is assassination, land mines or biological weapons. The question then becomes where to draw the line.

The limitations of Gelderloos' argument point to some ways for nonviolent activists to improve the presentation of their own views.

- Challenge the assumption that violence is always more effective than nonviolence by using simple examples, for example of when violence is counterproductive for the state or protesters.
- Expose double standards in discussions of violence and nonviolence, for example by pointing out failures of violence.
- Become more familiar with case studies of nonviolent campaigns.
- Be familiar with both the principled and pragmatic traditions in nonviolence, and the interaction between principles and effectiveness.

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# GANDHI MARG

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## Rural Rejuvenation: Strategic Shift to Agro-Industries Imperative

THE RECENT REPORTS of suicides by farmers in different parts of the country once again reiterate the need for reexamining the farm policy of the government. One may mention here that since the UPA government came to power, around 17,000 farmers have committed suicide, especially in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Punjab. While one section of experts has been of the opinion that farming has ceased to be profitable because of dwindling water resources coupled with high cost of inputs, the other group feels that diversification of crops and emphasis on rural and agro-based industries would obviously retrieve the situation.

There can be no denying that today's agriculture is a high cost and energy-intensive technology, which needs high inputs in respect of quality seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation and farm mechanization. Moreover the present policy of farm income as tax-free largely benefits the rich farmers of the so-called green revolution.

They became big landlords and a privileged group. Taking advantage of technological advancements, they further consolidated their position and increased rural disparities.

On the other hand, the fragmentation of land because of property divide put the small farmers in a crisis situation. The problem in the backward villages was further aggravated due to soil conditions not conducive to multi-cropping as also lack of roads and electricity. The steps needed to increase agricultural productivity have not quite been successful. The other factor that also cannot be denied is the increasing use of farmland for industries, dam construction and special economic zones and farmers being forced to sell their land at below market prices for such usage.

An average net income of Rs. 2500 per year per acre from farming in Maharashtra even in a good year was simply not enough for most

farmers to have adequate disposable income to meet contingencies. Therefore the need would be to provide the farmer with some steady, assured income, the mode and quantum of which could be decided after due consultation with different stakeholders. A suggestion that has been advanced is to provide direct subsidy to the farmer, but its feasibility need to be examined.

Keeping all this in view, the government of India has taken the right decision to invest Rs. 10,000 crores in 39,000 scheduled caste majority villages across the country. A committee of ministers has been working on the plan to transform these into model villages with better housing, drinking water, boarding schools and entrepreneurial loans for residents. Around Rs. 2000 crores or more is expected to be spent over the next five years towards rural rejuvenation.

Ministries and states implementing these schemes will concentrate on villages where 50 per cent or more of the population are dalits. However, this scheme will have tie-ups with the Bharat Nirman programme as well as several centrally-sponsored schemes like the Indira Awas Yojana and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) for better rural housing, employment generation, drinking water mission etc. it needs to be mentioned here that the government has provided a generous Rs. 31,280 crores (including the North Eastern component) in 2008-09 against Rs. 24,603 crores in the previous fiscal while the NREGS (to cover all the 596 districts of the country) has been given Rs. 16,000 crores and more money has been assured.

Though these schemes appear quite promising and are definitely geared towards rural development, the question that also needs to be addressed is how to modernize agriculture, on the one hand, and evolve diversification strategies such as food processing, horticulture, floriculture, agro-based industries etc, on the other. While in the long run, there may be need to shift from subsistence farming to enterprise farming for which large-scale investments would obviously be needed, specially for post-harvest and cold chain infrastructure near to the farmers' fields. This may help big fanners (and also to an extent the medium ones) who could fight the challenge of multinationals with help and support from the government.

According to an assessment by an expert committee set up by the Agriculture Ministry, an investment of Rs. 11,172 crores would be required in the next ten years for infrastructure development for agricultural marketing. A major policy shift has been the realization that dependence of the rural population on agriculture must decline

with shift occurring towards activities such as grading, storing, processing, marketing, transportation and exports.

### *Diversification Strategy*

Revolution in food processing and horticulture is being envisaged as there has been a realization about the potential of these sectors in economic revival. Various state governments at various conferences agreed to actively encourage investment in agro-processing industry to reduce wastage and promote value addition. Today a mere 2 per cent of the total fruit production is processed and food wastage is as high as 30 per cent. If the development of agro-based industries is given special attention, for which the government has reportedly earmarked Rs. 2000 crores, this could change the face of Indian villages. An integrated food law may be brought in place of the current multiple laws and regulations, which prescribed various standards and affected normal growth of the food processing industry.

A new mission for horticulture has been finalized which aims to give vegetable and fruit growers a better deal and evolve a more effective producer-consumer mechanism. The mission is supposed to create more jobs villages in transportation, marketing packaging and retail distribution. The Planning Commission blueprint in horticulture submitted to the Prime Minister lists ambitious goals that include:

- (i) doubling of current production to meet demands,
- (ii) increasing the per capita availability of fruits and vegetables,
- (iii) increasing horticulture exports,
- (iv) encouraging investment in research and development,
- (v) improving irrigation facilities.

A whopping figure of around Rs. 15,000 crores is proposed to be allocated over the next five years for promoting horticulture across the country, according to the Union agriculture ministry. Apart from value addition, both these sectors are considered important areas for generating employment, which in turn could help in strengthening the rural economy.

The other area, which has emerged of consequence, is floriculture. It may be mentioned here that India's agro-climatic diversity gives it the capability to cultivate large number of flowers that can be grown in the high altitudes specially of Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and the J&K. The former President propagated the use of genetic science for developing fragrant and unique-shaped flowers

in a big way. According to him, targeting \$ 1 billion worth of flowers exports annually by the year 2010 could be achieved through various measures like easy credit for floriculturists and research programmes for developing indigenous floriculture products. Dr. Kalam said a mechanism should be in place to facilitate the free movement of floriculture products within the country.

The need to work in close coordination with research institutes and bring more value-added products for the international markets is essential at this juncture and this is what the former President has been harping for quite some time. In fact, he had even earmarked about five acres in Rashtrapati Bhavan for carving experiments in floriculture, which could go a long way in spreading the cultivation of floriculture in different parts of the country.

Horticulture, floriculture and food processing could add value to products and ensure better returns for the farming community. These unexplored areas with active support from research institutes could also help in generating adequate employment opportunities and help the steady process of revival of the rural economy. Moreover through a proper plan, the country could also gain valuable foreign exchange through exports.

Apart from these, there has to be proper development of cottage and village industries and the Government has to come forward in this regard to encourage artisans and ensure that they get the market value for their products. Identifying around 200 growth centers throughout the country and then laying the proper infrastructural facilities, specially roads and power (and also telecommunication facilities), would ensure accessibility to markets and help sell produce at competitive rates. This could be completed in a time-bound frame of five years or so that is, by the middle or end of the Eleventh Plan. The new programme of 39,000 model villages or PURA (which also envisions the development of 826 clusters in 593 districts) has to be carried out pragmatically and judiciously in coordination with the other Central schemes.

The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) aptly suggested the need to promote all kinds of small, micro and tiny enterprises with credit, marketing and technology support. Clusters of tiny industries deserve SEZ treatment more than the rich exporting units. Priorities in credit should go to the micro enterprises and small farmers. The whole planning process in India, as also in many other countries of the Third World, must now centre around helping the poor and the vulnerable.



### *New Approach*

The rural-based approach is imperative at this juncture to meet the socio-economic aspirations of the farming community to improve living standards. Today's situation calls for ensuring proper livelihood for the small and marginal farmers whose fragmented holdings coupled with high cost of inputs cannot sustain them a living purely on core crops. The diversification of agriculture can help them find employment or they could also become self-sustaining through cooperatives.

One may refer to a report long back of the independent International Commission on Peace and Food, chaired by the eminent agricultural scientist, Dr. M. S. Swaminathan (1994) wherein he argued, extrapolating the '*Prosperity 2000 Strategy for India*' that the goal of one billion jobs in ten years was achievable through a low-cost strategy by using agriculture as an engine of growth. According to the plan, around half of new jobs (45 million) will be generated on farms by raising productivity through imposed management of micro-nutrients and water, expanding the total irrigated area, emphasizing on more labour-intensive commercial crops such as sugar, cotton, fruit, flowers and vegetables, sericulture, and increasing subsidiary incomes from husbandry and poultry. The additional agricultural production will produce raw materials for expansion of agro-industries and generate non-farm 10 million rural employment. The multiplier effect of increased rural incomes will furthermore create another 45 million rural and urban jobs in industry and services. However, the government has not taken this plan seriously.

Thus, as has been rightly emphasized, both agriculture and agro-industry would have to develop simultaneously so that benefits reach all sections of the rural mass and remove socio-economic disparities. The approach of the present Government makes one optimistic, specially the schemes for model development of villages and creation of better infrastructure. If there is sincerity and dedication of the implementation authorities as also district and panchayat officials, it may not take much time to transform the face of rural India. To begin the target of making 39,000 model villages could be achieved within five years or much earlier with the requisite infrastructure. The earlier problems with government schemes/programmes, which lacked transparency and accountability with attendant corruption, would have to be done away with.

India can definitely emerge as an agricultural power if a better

strategy is implemented. There is an urgent need to overhaul socio-economic and farm policies to remove rural disparities and remove rural poverty or at least bring it down. The face of rural India has to be transformed so that diversification strategies bring more value-addition and create job opportunities, thereby helping to revive the rural economy and simultaneously effecting poverty-alleviation.

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## Scope of Interfaith Dialogue in Gandhian Thought

MAHATMA GANDHI'S IDEAS of *Satyagraha* lays stress on inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, a method of ensuring enduring peace among different cultural, religious and ethnic groups within and between societies. As a keen observer of human affairs Gandhi expressed himself on problems that contemporary society confronted in various ways. He saw potential conflict arising from religious disharmony, intolerance and lack of understanding between communities. The pages of Indian history bear the stamp of interfaith dialogue oriented towards the unity and integration of people in a culturally plural Indian society. So he worked ceaselessly for the breaking of barriers between various faiths and even nations. He felt the need to develop awareness of inter-dependence of communities. Unless we realize the fundamental unity of faiths, wars in the name of religion will not cease according to him. Peace can come by the purity of its adherents, never by their quarrels with other faiths. His secular philosophy is a significant feature of contemporary life. He always fought for equal rights to all. Being a synthesizer he realized that all religions in India represent a composite culture. So in Gandhian worldview there is no space for clash of civilizations. He even rejected the very idea of such a clash. Instead he realized that in spite of

separatism the world is moving towards the spirit of greater friendliness and no one can stop the march towards our common destiny. Arnold Toynbee predicted in the 10th volume of 'The Study of History,' that Gandhi's ideals will be followed through the ages by later generations.

Gandhi used the method '*Satyagraha*' based on the idea that moral appeal is more effective than an appeal based on violence. '*Satya*' is the Sanskrit word for 'Truth.' '*Agraha*' means 'hold on.' When combined it means 'holding on to Truth' or 'insistence upon Truth.' Truth reveals to us in different forms and the *Satyagraha* enables us to see the 'one unbreakable Truth' in a different form, from a new angle. It enables us to have a complete knowledge of Truth. He learnt from Hindu scriptures that there is no *dharma* higher than Truth. Spiritual unity is the highest Truth and it can be realized through non-violent means by loving all. That is why *Satyagraha* identifies itself with love force or truth force. Gandhi described his religion as 'Religion of Truth.' Instead of saying 'God is Truth,' he has been saying 'Truth is God.' 'My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth.' All human beings are sparks of that Truth. Plato said in his Republic, 'God is Truth and light his shadow.' The shadow of mankind is caused by light obstructed. *Satya* is therefore the effort of the soul to wake up from its slumber.

People are striving to know the Truth. Each one realizes the Truth in his own way. No two persons put it in identical terms as they are not identical. So there is bound to be some differences. Also 'Truth' is not the exclusive property of the particular faith or single scripture, so one cannot be the judge of other seekers of Truth. Realization of this would end all enmity towards the followers of various faiths. The purpose of *Satyagraha* for Gandhi was to generate the process of introspection and rethinking which would make it possible to arrive at a readjustment of relationship between various groups. This had to be done without generating hatred and violence. It was the kind of moral struggle in which Gandhi could lose all the battles but still win the war.

### Comparative Study of Religions

The comparative study of the various religions of the world revealed to Gandhi the basic unity of various religions. Like medieval saints and *Sufis* he discovered the eternal truth – the essence of all religions, to transcend the narrow limit of sectarianism. He conceived religion as an all comprehensive, elevating principle operating in every sphere of individual, social and national life. The ultimate goal is moral order to uphold human values or the way of life, a code of conduct for

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social interaction of the people in secular order. His religious activities were not separated from other activities. All his actions were based on the basic principles. He wrote: "I read Max Muller's book *India—What can it teach us?* and the translations of the *Upanishads*, published by the Theosophical Society. It enhanced my regard for Hinduism. It did not however prejudice me against other religions. I read Washington Irving's *Life of Mohammad and His Successors* and Carlyle's discourse on the Prophet. These books raised Prophet Mohammad in my estimation. I also read a book called *Sayings of Zarathustra*. All the study of various religions stimulated my self-introspection and fostered in me the habit of putting into practice whatever appealed to me in my studies."

He revealed that every religion, in one way or the other, affirms the existence of one Supreme God. So the different religions are the various ways to arrive at the same point. What does it matter if we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? After all the different faiths give universal message. The fundamental truths of all great religions of the world are equal in the sense that all are true as God given and help in the spiritual progress of humanity. The various religions are like the leaves on a tree. No two leaves are alike, yet there is no antagonism between them or between the branches on which they grow. In the same way there is an underlying unity in the variety which we see in God's creation. Religions are like beautiful flowers from the same garden. All prophets are equal. They may be looked upon as belonging to the particular community, but as their teachings belong to the whole world, they are universal figures. Therefore, inherently, the followers of various faiths are equal and members of one family under the heaven. I have known no distinction between Hindus and Indians of other faiths; whether Christians or Jews, Muslims, Parsis and followers of other faiths. All the faiths of the world insist on equality of human race, as all are the children of same Father. — whom the Hindu, Muslim and Christian know by different names. The various followers see the Truth from different angles of vision, so each human mind has a different conception of God. But ignorance towards other's religion results in clashes: 'It is wrong to revile one another's religion or making reckless statements about any religion without proper understanding, which results in clashes with one another.'

Gandhi neither felt the need of only one religion nor aimed any fusion of religions, as he felt every religion has a special contribution to make to human evolution. 'I do not expect India to develop one religion i.e. to be wholly Hindu, or wholly Christian, or wholly Muslim.' I want religions to be working side by side with one another.

There will always be different religions according to different temperaments and climatic conditions. As we never think alike, it is natural that there will be differences of opinion. The only possible rule of conduct in any civilized society should, therefore, be mutual understanding or dialogue with the followers of other faiths. All are judged not according to their faiths or professions but according to their actions. But during earthly existence there will always be these labels.

Gandhi's approach of understanding religion was never of an exclusivist. Though he claimed to be a staunch Hindu, he never felt it enough unless he understands the position of other religions as equal. 'My own religion not only permits me to do so, but renders it obligatory for me to take the best from whatsoever source it may come.' 'I find room in my faith for Christian, Islamic and Zoroastrian teaching, therefore my Hinduism seems to be a conglomeration and some have even dubbed me an eclectic, is to say no faith.'

But Gandhi himself considered his faith as a broad faith which does not oppose other faiths, based on broadest possible toleration. It is that broad faith that sustains him. His statement was that 'he welcomes winds from all cultures to blow into his house.' His faith drew from every religion, a faith that was all inclusive.

He considers that the cultivation of tolerance for other faiths can impart truer understanding of one's own faith: 'I plead to broadest toleration and I am working to that end.' Some may feel such toleration against their prestige or ego. But Gandhi considers it a relation of love: 'I have no desire for prestige, which is furniture required in court of kings. I am a servant of Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Jews as I am Hindus. And a servant is in need of love not prestige.' It also does not indicate changing one's own religion to another faith or conversion, which he considers is not always done with the purity of heart but because of some material gain. Such people, who change their religion like their clothes, can never be an asset to any religion. Faith is essentially a personal matter not of any kind of bargain. One should have roots deep in one's own faith to understand other faiths in a better way. 'Since my youth it has been a humble effort on my part to understand the truth of all the religions of the world and adopt and assimilate in my own thought, word and deed; all that I found best in those religions'. Not accepting anything from other faiths, was considered an act of fanatic. His thorough study of various religions made him to realize that all the religions are right but every one of them are imperfect because they were interpreted with poor understanding and more often misinterpreted. '...more often, I found

to my grief, that there were various and even contradictory interpretations of some texts.

### Scriptures of the World

Gandhi advocated the study of the scriptures of the world, which he considered a sacred duty of civilized men and women. It enriches our understanding towards our own religion: 'I read and get all my inspiration from the *Bhagavad-Gita*. But I also read the *Bible* and the *Quran* to enrich my own religion. I incorporate all that is good in other religions.' Many a time when I did not know which way to turn, I read the *Bible* particularly New Testament and receive the strength from its message. I hold *Granth Sahib* in high reverence. It stresses upon the ultimate triumph of right and justice. All the great works of the world provide the same law of love and inspiration to me? His approach towards various faiths was not with critical mind. It helped him to find similarities in the teachings of various scriptures. They are complementary to each other: 'Today supposing if I am deprived of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and forgot all its contents but have a copy of the *Sermon*, I would get the same joy and comfort from, as I get from *Bhagavad-Gita*.'

Gandhi stressed the need to develop positive outlook for better understanding. There is need to read *Quran* with the eye of a Muslim, the *Bible* with the eye of a Christian and if you read the *Bhagavad-Gita* with the eye of a Hindu to understand it properly. There is no use of scanning details and then holding up a religion to ridicule. If somebody does it, shows his ignorance about the particular religion. Experience has taught me that it is a mistake to imagine that anything that we cannot understand is wrong. True knowledge of various faiths breaks down the barriers between faith and faith.' I believe in *sarvadharmasamabhava* - equal respect for all faiths and creeds. My equal regards compels me to understand their viewpoint, to appreciate the light in which they look upon their religion. It means we should emphasize points of agreement and not make much of the points of difference.'

The state of religion in contemporary society is very gloomy. Unfortunately mankind has lost its essential oneness and got divided up into mutually antagonistic groups, resulting in tragic delusion and conflict. The various communities look upon the other as separate. It is hampering harmony among the communities and develops fundamentalism and blind faith. It was unacceptable to Gandhi. For Gandhi religion never means sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral Government of the universe. It transcends Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity etc. and does not supersede them. It harmonizes them and gives them reality.

### Interfaith Education

Gandhi was for imparting interfaith value-oriented education in school and college curriculum. Every student need to understand the values of other faiths besides their own, which can help in liberalizing their outlook about life. Knowledge about only one's own faith may develop negative attitude towards others. The study of various faiths will give a grasp of the basis of the unity of religions, which lies beyond various faiths and their sects. The instruction of such education should be based on the basis of translation of scriptures, not made by a hostile critic but prepared by a lover of that scripture. For example, to study Bible, one should study it through the commentaries of devoted Christians. The students must be trained to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrines of various great religions of the world. To promote these virtues among students, Gandhi directed the teachers to rigorously practice these virtues in their lives. He also warned, 'let no one even for a moment entertain the fear among students that such study may weaken their own faith.' Instead the aim should be extension of regards for other faiths.

Gandhi's vision of free India was that of a secular state. At social level all religions should be respected, at political level morality should reign supreme and at the level of state, religious denominations should not be determinants state policy. He opposed any proposal for a state religion. The State's role is looking after secular welfare, health, communication etc. but not one's religion. That is everybody's personal concern. Gandhi's concept of secular state has nothing in common with religious nationalism or cultural nationalism. Communal politicians put a big question mark on the concept of secular state. The fundamentalists have condemned the concept of secular state by saying it is a western concept and anti-religion. Secular leaders were with him in his freedom struggle against British, who stood for a 'composite Indian nationalism.' Gandhi's prayer meetings were held not in temples but under the open sky and became a symbol of religious harmony by including recitation from Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Parsi, Buddhist and Jain texts. The aim of prayer, *prarthana* or *namaz* for him was the same, to realize the bond of unity with the entire human family. When the prayers and hymns had been recited, he spoke on the problems which the country faced. In the last months of his life at a time of bitter religious tension, his prayer meetings became a symbol of tolerance and his post-prayer talks served the purpose of a daily Press Conference.

**Conclusion**

The causes of differences and conflicts in this world are according to Gandhi due to the misunderstanding that develops out of the varieties of names and terms of Truth. Truth is one and the same everywhere. But it has various dresses. The misfortune is that the world worships terms and not the meanings. Thus though all worship the same God people quarrel on account of differences in terms. It is not faith but the people who differ from each other in comprehending the Truth and thereby deny the essence of their respective religions. Gandhi quoted poet Iqbal, who has written the immortal line: 'Religion does not inculcate mutual strife' (*Mazhab nahin sikhata apas mein bair rakhna*). It is due to our cowardice that we fight amongst ourselves.

In recent years Indian polity has shown stark variance from the values for which Gandhi had stood for. His philosophy is absent from our daily life. Discussions among the intelligentsia give an impression of helplessness and researches have shown that the root of all problems invariably lies in the infringement of value systems. Gandhi lived by moral and ethical precepts and his method of conflict resolution attracted worldwide attention. His message of *Satyagraha* was never as relevant as in today's increasingly intolerant society. We need to comprehend his ideals and courage to implement them. It is indeed a matter of satisfaction that Indian youths today are taking some interest in the life and works of Gandhi. Media also plays an important role in creating awareness among masses about the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.

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# Gandhi: The Unanimous Choice of the Colonizer and the Colonized

THE APOTHEOSIS OF Gandhi has been a long established tradition globally even though Gandhi himself squirmed at such attempts. In the 'Introduction' to his 'An Autobiography or The Story Of My Experiment With Truth', He observed:

*My experiments in the political field are known, not only in India, but to a certain extent to the 'civilized' world. For me, they have not much value; and the title of 'Mahatma' that they have won for me has, therefore, even less. Often the title has deeply pained me; and there is not a moment I can recall when it may be said to have tickled me.*

It is indeed very easy to praise someone who has already been praised a lot because in that case it becomes customary for all to nod in consent. Some times opinion of even the intelligentsia is so strongly in favour of or against some public figures that one who attempts to make an objective assessment ends up looking like either a dwarf or a fool who hasn't really understood the greatness of the hero!

The fact that Gandhi was a post-modernist thinker need not be emphasized. He stood up against the prevailing meta-narratives such as colonial imperialism and capitalism as well as past meta-narratives such as racism, casteism and the so called gender superiority of men vis-a-vis the women. However in his own lifetime, 'Gandhism' became a kind of 'meta-narrative' that over-shadowed many personalities with potential such as Chander Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Subhas Chander Bose and B.R. Ambedkar.

The basic drawback of these personalities was that these people stood at the opposite end of Gandhi and so too their philosophy. Of these only Ambedkar survived the avalanche called 'Gandhi' that obliterated Bhagat Singh and sent Subhas Chander Bose to the oblivion.

Ambedkar alone survived well and after Gandhi because his primary concern was not the independence movement against the British Raj. His movement was of a different kind, led as it was against indigenous subjugation orchestrated by the caste system that had held to ransom the subaltern population of the country. He too was a postmodern thinker in the sense that he sought to challenge a 'meta-narrative' - the 'caste system'. He sought to focus on enemies within the Indian society, that is, native forces or systems opposing social change and social reform before he could think about subjugation by

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the foreigners.

In fact, both Gandhi and Ambedkar were 'anti-foundationalist' post-modernists but they could never agree with each other. Ambedkar never understood Gandhi's viewpoint that internal differences must not be played too much before the British rulers. Gandhi, on the other hand, could not assuage Ambedkar's hurt feelings or lessen his bitterness vis-à-vis the caste system. Nevertheless, the two together went a long way in exposing that *"truth is the product of interpretation, facts are constructs of discourse, objectivity is just whatever questionable interpretation of things has seized power."*

Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose perished because they lacked the sustainability that Gandhi possessed. The question is from where did Gandhi derive this sustainability? It couldn't possibly be something as ephemeral as his personal dynamism. Rather it is related to his ideology and methodology that refuses to become redundant even when the pioneer or original exponent is no longer alive. In fact Gandhi is not around but his *"fame and philosophy lives on"*.

Gandhi chose as his weapon an inexpensive strategy called 'non-violence' and evolved a philosophy called 'satyagraha' inspired, perhaps, by Hindu mythic figures like Raja Harishchandra and his descendent Lord Ram. The practice of 'non-violence' and 'satyagraha' require nothing other than courage and conviction. This gave Gandhi a cutting edge. In his hands 'non-violence' and 'satyagraha' became more lethal than all conventional weaponry put together. Anyone could join his campaigns. Even a single person could launch a 'satyagraha' all on his own anywhere if he or she was absolutely sure about 'what is right' and 'what is wrong'. Even a beggar could become a satyagrahi and join the independence movement so too a raja. It is to be noted that even Ambedkar's movement was non-violent in nature. He went on to embrace Buddhism that has no place for violence in its creed.

The tactics of Bhagat Singh, Chander Shekhar Azad and Subhas Chander Bose, however, was heavily dependent on financial resources. All of them were militant in their approach. This militant methodology proved to be their greatest stumbling block. It reduced their 'staying' power. The arrangement of finance, weapons, manpower etc were nagging practical problems which they managed somehow and perished in the process of doing so. Last but not the least, the violent nature of their movement gave the British Raj a free hand to react the way it thought fit. No wonder the Raj lost no time in hanging Bhagat Singh.

Such was the craze for this exceptional revolutionary that had he lived he might have eclipsed Gandhi himself. It is to be noted that Bhagat Singh was not inherently of violent temperament. He had

merely wanted to highlight certain issues and to expose the difference between what the English preached and what they actually practiced. His letters and statements show that he too was essentially a thoughtful person with a profound philosophy of his own with charisma and oratory skill to match. He too had the potential to move millions and extract freedom from the iron grip of the colonizers even after eschewing violence. Who knows he might have joined Gandhi and strengthened his hands? Gandhi and other leaders, however, did not lobby hard enough for the young man. The question is: was Bhagat Singh a victim of the British or a victim of the collective jealousy of all Indian leaders including Gandhi? Were the British and Indian leadership in connivance with each other about Bhagat Singh? The explosive that Bhagat Singh threw had not caused any casualties. His accomplices might have been guilty of murder but Bhagat Singh's hands were clean. Yet he was awarded the death penalty. His life could have been saved had Gandhi lobbied sincerely for him. However the Indian leadership was strangely lethargic and reluctant in saving this extraordinary young leader. Gandhi used ideological differences as an excuse to ignore Bhagat Singh's death penalty. Sensing his apathy, the Raj showed undue haste in executing him. The hapless multitude of Indian people could do nothing other than shed silent tears for their hero who could have been saved as he had not taken anyone's life.

In the context of Gandhi, however, the equation changed. The British Raj could never do (or was uninterested in doing) what it had done with Chander Shekhar Azad or Bhagat Singh. Gandhi was leading a non-violent struggle and hence had the moral upper hand. His strategy and philosophy had gained global acceptance. He was an international figure already attracting and inspiring people of all races and continents. No Britisher could dare to touch him without the gravest of repercussions. All hell would have broken loose if anything had happened to Gandhi at the hands of the British. Gandhi could be killed only by an 'insider' and this was exactly what happened.

Is it not an irony that Gandhi was killed by the very people for whom he fought the British? On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1948, Godse killed not just Gandhi but also his philosophy. People suddenly realized the startling reality that Gandhism is not invincible. It may be opposed to hatred and violence but it itself is not immune to violence. Their faith was badly shaken. Godse, frustrated over the partition of the country or rather Gandhi's succumbing to Jinnah's pressure tactics, drove home the message that Gandhians talk too much, they give too much, they expect too much and that they listen too much. By getting rid of

Gandhi, Godse showed how to get rid of someone or something that gets too troublesome. He tried to show how to tackle this excessively pacifist and charitable line of thinking that, according to him, involved endless years of wait, unending tolerance and patience besides forgiving the culprits too who all along had exploited or hurt or used/ misused the resources of the victims. Gandhism ought to be practiced when the enemy is too strong and not amongst us Indians who all stand on the same footing. Gandhism would not get defeated by counter Gandhism. It is fit methodology or philosophy for the British only. Now when the country was free, both Gandhi and Gandhism was dispensable. This line of thinking probably led Godse to assassinate the Mahatma.

Gandhi knew that the British would not get defeated by armed struggle. The weapon would have to be different and the strategy entirely unique and novel, something that the entire country would be able to comprehend and practice easily as Indians, at that time, were largely illiterate as well as poor. He studied every religion carefully. He used religious concepts and mythic figures to revive the moral and spiritual courage of the people. He then turned that moral and spiritual energy towards national resurgence. However his assassination put a halt to this national (and social) reform and resurgence. Gandhism got restricted to merely getting the country free from foreign yoke.

Does Gandhi's assassination in 1948 imply that British India was safer for Gandhi than independent India? Were the colonizers better protector of our national leaders? It is to be noted that after independence there have been many assassinations beginning with Gandhi himself. Was the presence of the British, that is, the common enemy, keeping us united? Did their exit in 1947 embolden us to do whatever we felt like with each other with impunity?

Independence and democracy has given each of us 'voice' but unfortunately it has also led us, leaders and people alike, to think that one can do whatever one likes to the extent of doing away with someone if necessary. No wonder weapons have been used expediently after independence in politics. Leaders (and even their supporters) of national, regional or local stature have been killed by their detractors or rivals because they could not be defeated or marginalized in any other way.

Before freedom 'system' or government machinery killed leaders and people alike. After independence, leaders and people have tried to kill, that is, subvert the system. In colonial India the motive was to control the spread of patriotic fervour and to intimidate or eliminate the freedom fighters. After independence, however, the motives

range from gaining political power to grabbing land, property, businesses or even controlling elements that may be taking advantage of their political or bureaucratic connections and harassing men and women to whose rescue the 'system' or government machinery is not coming.

During the British rule, Chander Shekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chander Bose were as much a victim of the colonial system as the native leadership which could not accommodate them, convince them or give them the place that they deserved in the freedom struggle being led by Gandhi and the Congress. The native leadership failed to come to the rescue of these bright brave men with potential. It did not do justice to them. These men with spark were a pain in the neck for the British as well as the Indian leadership because they did not agree with the pacifist strategy of Gandhism. Hence they died before time or vanished into oblivion like Bose.

In the context of Gandhi, however, the situation was different. Gandhi was needed as much by the British as by the Indian people. If the extremists (or the terrorists as the British called them) were like the 'rabbit', Gandhi was the veritable 'tortoise'. His strategy was long drawn that gave the British ample time to prepare for home journey and return as safely as possible. Extremist or military movements, on the other hand, would have led to a hasty and unprepared exit with perhaps an empty booty and many dead bodies. The English haughtily believed that the sun never sets on the empire. However, who knows, like the prison of Bastille in France, the empire too would have got uprooted in a day if the firebrand freedom fighters like Azad, Bhagat Singh and Bose had their way?

The crux of the matter is that Gandhi was as much a choice of the Indian people as the British about who should lead the freedom struggle or who should be 'allowed' to lead it. The colonial rulers were shrewd enough to realize that he was a figure who ended up protecting even them because of his philosophy of 'non-violence' and 'satyagrah'. The fact is that if the Indian people needed Gandhi then the British too had equal need of him. Gandhi served and protected the interests of both with minimum possible damage till he succumbed before the pressure tactics of Jinnah.

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# GANDHI MARG

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## Book Reviews

**Siby K. Joseph and Bharat Mahodaya, ed., 'Essays on Conflict Resolution',** Institute of Gandhian Studies, Wardha, 2007, pages ix+186, price Rs. 250.

Conflicts are an integral part of human life. Usually they connote negativity implying irreconcilability and rigidity. It is often presumed that they create dislike, hatred and end up in violence. There is, however, now an increasing realization that it cannot be and should not be necessarily so. One cannot live with conflicts around; conflicts need to be resolved. In this context it is of crucial importance to implement creative and non-violent methods to resolve conflicts. Now there is increasing attention being focused on methods other than war such as alternative dispute resolution, community mediation, dissemination of information, opening of the channels of communication, negotiation, adjudication and reconciliation.

This book '*Essays on Conflict Resolution*', edited by Siby K. Joseph and Bharat Mahodaya is a useful collection of selected papers presented at the international seminar organized by the Institute of Gandhian Studies and Fujji Guruji Memorial Trust at Wardha. The volume, with an introduction by the editors, is divided into two sections. The first contains articles dealing with the conceptual aspects of conflict resolution. The second deals with specific issues, actors and areas in conflict resolution.

Various writers explore different dimensions of the issue. Devavrat N. Pathak rightly points out the need to analyze conflicts objectively. A conflict is, in fact, a challenge that is to be taken as an opportunity for better future. Consequently conflict resolution requires innovative imagination, an invitation for a relentless search for solutions. Gandhi had innovated Satyagraha, which, for him, was not just a political weapon but a way of life. Ravindra Varma describes the unusual strength of the Indian struggle for independence under Gandhi, when similar powerful emotions arose and worked in the minds of individuals and groups to overcome the hatred and to suffer for a cause. This happened primarily because Gandhi could make people distinguish between the evil and the evil-doer. Varma also brings out the importance of religions and spiritual exercises that show how to tame the mind and orient it to peace and reconciliation. It is important

to remember, in this context, that Buddha Dharma talks of wisdom and loving compassion, and Gandhi talks of Truth, Love and Compassion.

K.D.Gangrade brings to focus the basic Gandhian principle in working with people to lead them from conflict of interests to a community of interests. In this context, the foremost task of education in building character must be attended to. Grazina Miniotaite writes about the problems and prospects about globalization and development of non-violent defense in Lithuania. Hirochi Yamaguchi highlights Gandhi's relevance in the context of some major conflicts in the world such as divided Korea, Middle East and India-Pakistan conflict. Ramjee Singh writes about the Gandhian approach to resolution of Indo-Pak conflict, and emphasizes the need for dialogue, impartial mediation, people to people relations, and a loose political model of federation or confederation.

E.P.Menon views the subject with a civilizational approach. He argues that all the societies must do conscious, deliberate efforts at all levels to create social equality among all sections of people; and must strive for creation of alternate economic philosophy and structure which would ensure full and equitable material justice to all. And it is in this context that one should study Gandhi and Marx. He further points out the role of the UN and regional organizations in peace-making, peace-building and peace-keeping. Rahul Bajaj, Sbbhash Mehta Ranjit Choudhuri and M.R.Rajagopalan, in their articles, discuss various aspects of violence and conflict resolution. .

Education evidently can have a positive impact on the process of conflict resolution. Role of academics in conflict resolution is brought by M. William Baskaran. He draws our attention to the need to have new creative approach, training facilities and more information on the efficacy of the methods of conflict resolution. Satyabrata Chowdhury brings out the importance of religion and education in conflict resolution.

M.B.Nisal deals with issue of identity politics and emphasizes the role of civil society in ethnic conflict resolution. Siby K. Joseph, in his important article, discusses the emerging role of NGOs in conflict resolution. He rightly points out that it is important for NGOs to maintain their independence without losing trust of the conflicting parties including the state. NGOs should give due attention to the tasks of coordination and networking for lobbying and advocacy at a higher level as well as to the need to acquire the requisite attitudes and skills. The role of the NGOs in conflict resolution is based on their presence at the ground level as actors with a reservoir of good will, generated through years of development and rehabilitation work.



The book presents various aspects of the issue of conflict resolution in a jargon-free and readable way. Gandhi's ways of resolving conflicts have not lost their freshness and innovativeness. Gandhi has propounded his theory of conflict resolution, rooted in the principles of truth and non-violence, and based on experience. He has put the practice of Satyagraha on scientific basis and has elaborated its techniques for its application to social and political problems. He has taught that the one who practices Satyagraha does not inflict suffering on the opponent but on oneself. The law of suffering is the key to success for a satyagrahi and progress is to be measured by the amount of suffering undergone by the sufferer. The purer the suffering, the greater is the progress.

Gandhi wanted to create a moral man in moral society. To achieve this, he was determined to fight evil and injustice in every field of life with the powerful instrument of Satyagraha. Vincent Shean calls it Gandhi's greatest invention. Gandhi has shown the way for resolving conflicts, resisting injustice in social, economic and political areas and for preventing divisions based on sectarian and parochial considerations. The book under review helps us to understand this and draws attention to various dimensions of conflicts and the strategies to solve them. It will prove to be useful for the students, scholars and all those interested in resolving conflicts.

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# GANDHI MARG

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VOLUME TWENTY-NINE □ NUMBER FOUR □ JANUARY-MARCH 2008

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*Articles:* Ramashray Roy, "Parameters of Participation", *Gandhi Marg*, 12, 3 (October-December 1990), p. 276.

*Chapters within Books:* Pearl S. Buck, "A Way of Living", in S. Radhakrishnan, ed., *Mahatma Gandhi: Essays and Reflections* (Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1956), p. 51.

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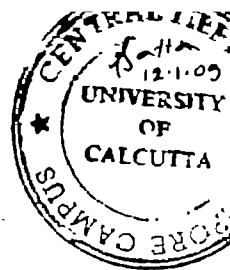
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Gandhi Peace Foundation  
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# Marx and Gandhi's Concept of Future Society

Y.V. Satyanarayana

## ABSTRACT

*Marx and Gandhi are the outspoken champions of the interests of the downtrodden and exploited humanity who fought in their own way against social suffering, political subjugation, and economic exploitation. The underlying principle in the philosophies of both these thinkers is the spirit of service to humanity. They have denounced exploitation of the weak by the strong and unequal distribution of wealth under the capitalist social order. They considered mere political freedom without basic necessities of human life as empty. They believed that private property is the root cause for the development of egoistic nature in man, which gives scope for the exploitation of human labour. Hence they considered that all forms of property and human accomplishments must belong to the society as a whole, and should be used for the good of all. Both believed that human history is advancing to higher and more rational forms of human society. They visualized an "exploitation free" society wherein the entire humanity could live in peace and harmony.*

## Introduction

THIS PAPER IS an attempt to explore, analyse and compare the views of Marx and Gandhi about the future of mankind, and their vision of an 'ideal society', wherein the entire humanity can live in peace and harmony.

It is usually thought that Marx and Gandhi stand opposed to each other in their approach to the problems of human life. However, a comparative study of their views reveals some basic affinities in their ideas, and there is no total opposition or disagreement in their social philosophies. As Marx and Gandhi lived in different social, historical and cultural conditions, which shaped their attitudes and

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thinking, it is quite natural for them to have divergent views. Furthermore, they have different presuppositions, which in their turn led them to understand human problems in different perspectives and offer divergent solutions.

The population of the contemporary world is divided into two classes of people – a minority class of “haves” and a vast majority of “have-nots”. Capitalism, as a form of social system, failed to provide a satisfactory solution to the problems of want, hunger, poverty and so on. Marx and Gandhi, as the champions of the poor and exploited humanity, have sharply reacted to the inhuman conditions of social existence under the capitalist social order. To liberate the toiling masses from the miseries, they have not only formulated certain social theories, but also offered an action-oriented programme in their own way, to fight against social suffering, political subjugation and economic exploitation.

### **Service to Humanity**

The underlying principle in the philosophies of Marx and Gandhi is the spirit of service to humanity. Their simplicity of life, selfless service to the downtrodden, identification with the poor and exploited, and love for humanity have a great impact on the masses all over the world, and these exploited people regard them as their saviours and protectors.

Marx believes that for every man it is vital to choose a profession which would give him a better opportunity to work for the welfare of mankind. The man, who dedicates his life to the service of mankind, would feel not the petty and limited egoism; his happiness would belong to the millions. If a man works only for himself, Marx says: “he may perhaps become a famous man of learning, a great sage, an excellent poet, but he can never be a perfect, truly great man”<sup>1</sup>

For Gandhi, the divine is not to be found in detachment from social life, but in serving the humanity in all aspects of life. The only way to find God is to see him in his creation. This can be done by service to all. He says that, “my creed is service of God and therefore for humanity.”<sup>2</sup> He maintains that self-realization is impossible without a complete identification and merging of oneself with the whole humanity. For him, there could be no realization of God, or no happiness on earth apart from the service of mankind. Thus, Gandhi reconciles self-realization with service to humanity. He regards that the duty of renunciation differentiates mankind from the beast and asserts that “man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellowmen.”<sup>3</sup>

Explaining about Gandhi’s belief in God, Gora, who is an atheist,

observes: "if he felt that the progress of humanity required leaving God altogether, I am sure, he was not the man to hesitate."<sup>4</sup> Of course, the concessions that Gandhi gave to atheists could not be understood as a change in his attitude to God, but they signify his essential concern for humanity and his toleration of all faiths. Commenting on Gandhi's concern for the service of humanity, John V. Bondurant says that, "despite the ever present overtones of religion in Gandhian thought, concern for human needs lie at the core of Gandhian teaching."<sup>5</sup>

### **Man and Society**

Though man and society are two different entities, Marx and Gandhi conceive them as inseparable, interdependent and eternally bound together because of mutual interests. Man is dependent on society not only for his protection, good health, education and such other comforts the society provides, but also for his thought-content, aspirations and for his entire existence. Society provides an environment in which man develops his human powers. There is always a perpetual action and reaction between man and society. Hence Marx says: "as society itself produces man as man, so is society produced by him."<sup>6</sup>

The essential difference between man and brute, according to Gandhi, is that the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him and rise above the level of passions that he owes in common with the brute. For Gandhi, man is not a mere creature of circumstances. He believes that manliness consists in making circumstances subserve ourselves. Self-restraint is a positive factor in man's life for overcoming the adverse circumstances, and it distinguishes man from the brute. He says: "the brute by nature knows no self-restraint. Man is man because he is capable of and only so far as he exercises self-restraint."<sup>7</sup>

For Marx, man and society are one in essence and being. The interests, aims and rights of man should in no way be opposed to the interests and aims of society. Marx asserts that man is, in the most literal sense of the word, a '*zoon politikon*' (a social animal); "he is not only a social animal, but an animal that can be individualised only within society."<sup>8</sup> Therefore, for Marx, society is a *sine qua non* for humanisation of the individual man.

Marx conceives that productive activity of the human collective is the root cause for the origin of society. The development and progress of society is the result of a continual productive interaction between men and nature. He says that men "begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their needs for subsistence."<sup>9</sup>

For Marx, the isolated individual is a fiction because the human

faculties, capacities and tastes, which distinguish man from that of animal, are shaped by society. He criticises the conception of man as a private, self-enclosed, socially exclusive and basically egoistic being. No human being exists who has not been born into, and thus shaped by an ongoing society. For this reason, Aristotle aptly said, 'man without a society is either a beast or a God'.

Marx and Gandhi consider man as essentially a social being, not only because of his distinctively human capacities and needs which are developed in society, but also because their exercise and satisfaction consists in social intercourse. Since man's abilities, skills and indeed his entire humanity are essentially social products, both these thinkers argue that those qualities should not be treated as the private property of any person, and use them as he pleases, but they should utilize them for the well-being of his fellow men.

Gandhi regards that every individual is a part of the nation or the social structure surrounding him and therefore he should use his talents not for himself, but for society. Man has risen to his present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Thus he observes:

Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. ... willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society, enriches both the individual and the society of which he is a member.<sup>10</sup>

Marx claims that in all class divided societies of human history, man has remained as egoistic, isolated, selfish, individualistic atom, lacking full awareness of the fact that he derived his distinctive human powers from his species. Thus he says:

Our desires and pleasures spring from society. We measure them, therefore, by society and not by the objects which serve for their satisfaction.<sup>11</sup>

Marx argues from an empirical fact that the enormous wealth which has been created and the enormous potential for the creation of new wealth are products of human cooperation, of intelligent organisation of the capacity of the species, rather than the result of individuals acting in isolation.

### Human Nature

Though Marx and Gandhi conceive man and his nature from different perspectives, they have similar views regarding perfectibility of human nature. Human nature, for both these thinkers, is neither

immutable nor remain constant for all time. Hence they reject the static conceptions of man and human nature. For Marx, man and his nature are essentially historical and human nature changes drastically along with human achievements.<sup>12</sup> For instance, men under capitalism are products of what capitalist economy has made them and they are not always so, and we must not assume that they would not change in future.

Gandhi is not only concerned with man's being, but also with his becoming. Man, according to Gandhi, will ever remain imperfect, even though he will always "try to be perfect."<sup>13</sup> No human being is so bad as to be beyond redemption. The imperfections of man in the present state, he argues, would not negate the future possibility of his development to perfection. His belief in the innate goodness of man, and his capacity for improvement logically led him to believe that "class war" is superfluous and unnecessary.

### **Freedom and Democracy**

Marx and Gandhi recognise freedom as the basic requirement of human life to develop the inborn abilities and capacities of human beings. Since man is a social being, the individual must exercise his freedom within the limits of social responsibility. They regard that mere political freedom without the assurance of adequate material conditions for the development of all members of society is an empty notion. Political freedom, without freedom from the basic needs and requirements of human life, is worthless for practical purposes of life. The individual can be free only when the society is free from exploitation, want, hunger, poverty and so on.

Free activity, for Marx, is a creative manifestation of one's life that comes from an unconstrained development of one's abilities. Man can develop his powers only when he is free to plan his life as he chooses, and only when he is a 'sovereign of circumstances'. Freedom, in a class society, is a relative value which is enjoyed only by the exploiting class. "Freedom in a capitalist society", Lenin wrote, "always remains just about the same as it was in the ancient Greek republics: freedom for the slave-owners."<sup>14</sup>

Marx develops an economic solution to the problem of freedom. He believes that the realm of freedom does not commence until the productive forces are completely developed, and the economic foundation is laid for both abundance and leisure. For Marx, the fundamental premise in the realm of human freedom is "the shortening of the working day."<sup>15</sup>

For Gandhi, individual freedom without economic justice has little meaning. Freedom for the poor and the starving masses of people

should include economic content also, which could enable them to enjoy the fruits of political freedom. Thus he observes:

A starving man thinks first of satisfying his hunger before anything else. He will sell his liberty and all for the sake of getting a morsel of food.<sup>16</sup>

Though capitalism has created immense material wealth, Marx and Gandhi believe that it failed to distribute material wealth justly to the advantage of all the members of the society. It brought profound economic inequality under which a minority class of people possesses enormous wealth, wallows in luxury, and spends fabulous riches to satisfy their needs. But the vast majority class of people, who work and create the world's values by their labour, are unable to satisfy the most basic needs, and are forced to live in poverty and ignorance.

Marx and Gandhi's anarchist view of the state, i.e., a stateless society, is grounded on a philosophical affirmation of freedom as the supreme value, and a belief that the existence of the state is incompatible with its realization. For Marx, freedom and the state are mutually exclusive concepts. In so far as the state existed, man would remain unfree, and liberated man would enjoy not freedom in the state but freedom from the state. Gandhi conceives the state as a 'soulless machine', which represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. Hence he concedes merely a minimal role to the state. He says: "If people consciously retain political power in their hands, the state interference with their freedom would be reduced to the minimum."<sup>17</sup>

In spite of their opposition to the state, Marx and Gandhi regard that the state is a necessary evil till society attains its perfection.

Both Marx and Gandhi denounced capitalist democracy, which is based on exploitation of the weak by the strong and unequal distribution of wealth. Their deep concern and regard for the downtrodden and exploited humanity forced them to condemn the capitalist social order. Since individual freedom and human dignity are their prime concern, they champion the cause of the poor to provide them a decent life. They have proposed a true democratic form of government, where the real power exists in the hands of people.

Gandhi did not satisfy himself with the Western capitalist democracy, which is based on racial discrimination and capitalist exploitation. Individual freedom in a capitalist society degenerated into freedom for a few, and became a rule of jungle, where the strong preyed on the weak. He says: "It is the narrowness, selfishness,

exclusiveness which is the bane.... each wants profit at the expense of and rise on the ruin of the other."<sup>18</sup>

Democracy, in all class divided societies, according to Marx, has always remained as the dictatorship of some dominating class over others. For instance, in the Greek city states, the idea of equal rights of men did not apply to the slaves. Again, capitalist democracy, in practice, is a democracy for the minority, only for the owning class. As a result of capitalist exploitation, the vast majority of the people of society are suffering from want and poverty and therefore democracy is nothing for them, and politics is nothing for them. A true democracy, i.e., majority rule, Marx claims, is possible only in a socialist democracy, because it not only gives rights to the individuals, but also ensures the material conditions necessary to enjoy those rights.

Marx conceives the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary stage on the road of man's entry into a higher form of classless society. Like any other state, the socialist state is the dictatorship of a definite class, i.e., the working class, which is an instrument to free the working people from the clutches of the exploiters. The socialist state is both democratic and dictatorial—it is democratic in the sense that it expresses the will and interests of the majority class, and it is dictatorial in the sense that it suppresses the minority class of exploiters. For Marx and Engels the chief function of the state is to maintain the domination of one class over another and to suppress resistance by the oppressed classes. They wrote:

The cohesive force of civilised society is the state, which in all typical periods is exclusively the state of the ruling class, and in all cases remains essentially a machine for keeping down the oppressed, exploited class.<sup>19</sup>

As the state arises from the classes, the socialist state is bound to disappear with the elimination of all classes, which finally leads to a stateless and classless society. In a letter to Jon Weydemeyer Marx writes: "... this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."<sup>20</sup>

In spite of his great opposition to the state, Gandhi, as a realist, accepts a perfect democratic government in which the individual is the architect of his own government. He accepts the classical statement of Thoreau, 'that government is the best which governs the least'. He visualises an ideal non-violent state based on a federation of self-governing autonomous village republics with equality pervading in every sphere of life. Thus he says: "True democracy cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below



by the people of every village."<sup>21</sup>

Gandhi considers that political power should belong to the people, more so to the lowliest and the weak of the society. He says, "my notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest."<sup>22</sup>

In spite of some similarities in Marx's and Gandhi's ideas of freedom and democracy, they differ from each other in certain aspects. Unlike Marx, Gandhi never regards capitalist democracy as the dictatorship of the minority class over the majority class. Gandhi pleads for decentralisation of political power, whereas centralisation of power (dictatorship of the proletariat), for Marx, is essential to suppress the opposition of the exploiters of the past regime. In Gandhi's system of democracy, power is evolved from below, whereas in the socialist democracy of Marx, power is imposed from above. As distinguished from Marx's idea of democracy, Gandhi's concept of democracy is based on non-violence, where there is no scope for the suppression of any individual. Marx's approach to the problem of freedom is historical in the sense that freedom can be achieved only collectively in a future communist society towards which history will inevitably pass. Gandhi, on the other hand, approaches the problem of freedom from an individualistic standpoint, and is more concerned with individual freedom than collective. As an idealist, he believes that each individual can realize his ultimate end. He does not believe in the multiplicity of wants beyond a reasonable limit to improve the material conditions of man.

### **Dignity of Labour**

Marx and Gandhi consider human labour as the source of all wealth, and therefore no person should appropriate wealth except as the product of his labour. Marx holds the view that, if any one lives on the labour of others, he acquires his culture at the expense of the labour of others.<sup>23</sup> Gandhi, in a similar way, argues, "how can a man, who does not do body labour, have the right to eat."<sup>24</sup> In support of his argument, Gandhi quoted the famous Biblical saying, 'in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread'. He who enjoys bread without sharing the labour is considered by Gandhi as a thief. Thus Marx and Gandhi not only praise dignity of human labour, but also condemn its exploitation.

### **Private Property**

Both Marx and Gandhi believe that all forms of property and human accomplishments are either gifts of nature, or products of collective social effort. As such, they must belong not to the individual, but to

the society as a whole, and therefore should be used for the good of all. They have more or less similar views with regard to the institution of private property. They think that private property is the root cause for developing egoistic nature in man, and it gives scope for the exploitation of many by a few. Marx asserts that communism "wants to destroy every thing which is not capable of being possessed by all as private property."<sup>25</sup> Gandhi also expresses a similar view and says that, "I can only possess certain things which I know that others who also want to possess similar things, are able to do so."<sup>26</sup>

### **Methodology of Social Change**

Marx and Gandhi recognise the existence of classes and class conflicts as a fact, but advocate different methods to resolve them. Gandhi wants to resolve class conflicts by means of the trusteeship formula and the technique of non-violent non-cooperation. Marx does not accept Gandhi's principle of 'change of heart', because he considers it as a substitute of one set of illusions for another. He believes that men just simply do not give up their riches on hearing a socialist sermon. Marx, therefore, relies on the strength of the working class to emancipate itself through revolutionary means rather than the reformist means of Gandhi.

Marx and Gandhi are not merely speculative theorists. They have not only recognised the unity between theory and practice, but also placed before mankind the methods of 'class-struggle' and 'satyagraha' respectively for the vindication of freedom and human rights. They have revolutionised the character of philosophy and brought it to the realm of social action. Referring to the essential unity of thought and action, Marx and Gandhi respectively maintains:

The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it.<sup>27</sup>

Philosophy without life corresponding is like a body without life ... I know that in this land of ours we have enough philosophy, but little life.<sup>28</sup>

For Marx, production is the basic source of all social development and change. Every social system emerges out of the previous social system, establishes itself to fulfill the functions of the society and undergoes constant and continuous changes to an extent beyond which it cannot modify its modes of production. Consequently, the whole social structure breaks down and a new mode of production, which is basically different from its predecessor, emerges and forms a new social system.

The mode of production is closely related to the relations of production or property relations. The relations of production explain who owns the means of production, who are the producers, and the pattern of distribution of the products and so on. The mode of production undergoes gradual changes in response to the changing needs of man. These changes in the mode of production cannot go indefinitely, and at a particular point the relations of production become an obstacle for its development. This is the natural limit, or the nodal point of that particular mode of production, and any further pressure for change would destroy the entire mode of production. At this point, the social system takes a 'dialectical leap', and undergoes a complete change. Explaining the concept of social change, Marx observes:

No social order is ever destroyed before all productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replaces older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.<sup>29</sup>

Every social order, for Marx, is a product of class struggle, and social change is more revolutionary than evolutionary. Hence Marx and Engels hold the view that the "history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle".<sup>30</sup> The class struggle rises out of the conflict of interests between the ruling class and the exploited class. Marx attributed a unique place to the proletarian revolution. According to him, no previous revolution destroyed the exploitation of man by man, but merely replaced one form of exploitation by another. The distinguishing feature of proletarian revolution is that it could put an end to all exploitation, and open a new era in the history of mankind.

Gandhi's method of satyagraha is based on a greater understanding and love between the two classes of people involved in it. It is based on truth, works through non-violence, and achieves its end by converting or compelling the opponent through self-suffering. His approach is indeed voluntary conversion of the exploiting class to the cause of socio-economic justice by moral appeal to their conscience. His emphasis on moral conversion not only includes the moral transformation of the exploiter, but also the awakening of the workers and peasants to realize their moral strength. He prescribes trusteeship formula to the rich, and the weapon of non-violent non-cooperation or satyagraha to the poor and exploited to bring change in the attitude of the rich. He relies much on the strength of the masses at the grassroots level to play a dominant role

to bring social change.

Marx and Gandhi realise the fact that the exploitation of the masses can be extinguished by the exploited class itself, and therefore they put the burden of the programme of action on the shoulders of the exploited class. In this aspect, the non-violent resistance of Gandhi and the class struggle of Marx are based on the same sort of philosophical assumptions.

Marx and Gandhi believe that no social conflict can be resolved unless the sufferers realise their suffering and strength, constitute themselves into a class or an organization, refuse to cooperate with the evil and demonstrate their power to the evil-doers, or exploiters. Thus arousing of consciousness, continuing education, maintaining the unity of the sufferers, and providing them with a powerful organisation and leadership are the most essential phenomena in Marx and Gandhi's techniques of social action. In both these techniques, the struggle would not be successful unless the objective conditions have matured and the subjective activity is strengthened and intensified. The organisers and the participants should be willing to sacrifice not only their material comforts, but also their life.

Marx regards that socialism does not replace capitalism automatically by itself. The collapse of capitalism and the consolidation of socialism could not be caused exclusively from the objective laws, but it necessarily requires the conscious and purposeful subjective activity of the people. Thus Lenin observes:

Revolutions are never born ready-made; they do not spring out of Jupiter's head; they do not kindle at once. They are always preceded by a process of unrest, crises, movements, revolts.<sup>31</sup>

The basic aim of Gandhi's non-violent revolution is to reform the individual at the moral level. He believes that most of the evils of modern economic system existed because we cooperated with them, or tolerated them. Cooperation with the good and non-cooperation with the evil should be the duty of every citizen. Non-violence, for Gandhi, is not merely a personal virtue, but it is a social virtue. What holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe. He asserts that, "all virtue ceases to have use, if it serves no purpose in every walk of life."<sup>32</sup> Gandhi, as a man of practical affairs, predicts that, "I see coming the days of the rule of the poor, whether that rule be through force of arms or of non-violence."<sup>33</sup> He regards that the only alternative to trusteeship would be bloody revolution, and put before the capitalists to make a choice between class war and trusteeship. He warns them:

A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and of power that riches gave and sharing them for the common good.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Is an Ideal Society of Marx and Gandhi's Vision Possible?***

Many philosophers conceive that human history is advancing to higher and more rational forms of human society. In spite of many contradictions, historical zigzags, periods of stagnation and occasional relapses into long past stages, social progress is nevertheless an ascent from a less developed form of society to a new and higher developed form, which brings major changes in all aspects of social life. They believe that social progress is due to the immanent ability of the human mind, and an inborn capacity of man for self-improvement in accordance with the needs of the epoch.

The imperfections of the existing social order necessitated many philosophers and thinkers to visualize an ideal social order, wherein man can realize all his potentialities, and lead a happy and peaceful life. Marx and Gandhi have visualized an exploitation-free society of their own conception. For Marx, the ideal society is the 'communist society', whereas for Gandhi, it is 'Ramarajya'. Though Marx and Gandhi wanted to have an egalitarian social order, they differed in their methods to achieve it.

What are the stages through which the evolution of human society has advanced till now, and in what direction it may proceed in future?

If we understand the different stages of human evolution, we can arrive at an indication of the next possible stages of evolution of human society. If we know the direction of the evolution of human society, it would be possible for us to draw a programme of action suitable to the present stage, and to work for the realization of an ideal society.

For Marx, the ultimate motive forces of history and historical progress are to be found not in the realm of spirit, but in the realm of objective material relations. He explains the problem of social progress, its objective and subjective factors, its motive forces, its main historical phases, and the ways and means by which human societies ascent from the lower to the higher forms.

Marx scientifically explains the rise, development and decline of particular forms of societies in human history due to inherent contradictions and conflicts that existed in them. He regards that human history is an unbroken succession of social systems, with old systems giving way to the new and more advanced systems to their predecessors. In the history of humanity, Marx identified five important social systems – the primitive communal system, the slave-

owing system, the feudal system, the capitalist system and the future communist society. He regards that each of these social systems is historically progressive compared to its predecessor.

Marx believes that capitalist society is a necessary stage in the progress of humanity. When compared to other forms of past societies, capitalism is historically a progressive social system. In less than a century, it created more powerful means of production, material goods and wealth than all preceding generations taken together. Explaining the contribution of capitalist production, Marx observes:

... (it) creates those material conditions, which alone can form the real basis of a higher form of society, a society in which the full and free development of every individual forms the ruling principle.<sup>35</sup>

The germs of the future society, as Marx believes, are contained within the present society. The future communist society presupposes both the achievements and the sufferings, both wealth and misery of the present capitalist society. Capitalism has not only developed the economic and technological prerequisites of a future society, but also it created a political force for its own destruction. Thus capitalism, as Marx conceives it, has not only enslaved, destroyed and deprived man, but also created the necessary conditions for the ultimate emancipation of man.

Marx apprehends that a society based on class antagonisms had a need of the state to subjugate other classes by the ruling class. Once the classes are abolished, there is no need of the state and it gradually withers away, and finally leads to a classless and stateless communist society. Once the communist society comes into existence, there will be no scope for classes and class antagonisms, and the "social evolution will cease to be political revolutions."<sup>36</sup>

For Marx, communism as such is not the fulfillment of man's life, but it is the condition for such fulfillment. He conceives communism as the condition of human freedom and creativity, but not as the final goal of humanity. In a communist society, the struggle for existence ceases and man emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into truly human conditions. It assures the basic necessities of life to all members of the society, creates suitable conditions for the development of physical and mental faculties, liberates man from his one sided, partial and alienated labour activity, creates conditions for a free and creative labour, and seeks to develop talents and interests of each member of the society.

The material abundance of communism will make it possible to distribute goods, "from each according to his ability, to each according

to his needs.<sup>37</sup> Thus Marx's conception of communist society is not merely a society of plenty, but also a society of human dignity and freedom.<sup>38</sup> The communist society, as Marx envisages it, will not make angels out of devils, nor will it bring heaven on earth, but will solve only those problems that can be solved at this present stage in the development and progress of humanity.

The ideal society of Gandhi is based on the moral evolution of the individuals. Gandhi expresses the view that the ideal society may not be possible at the present stage of human development, but it may be possible in the course of human evolution. If people become genuinely non-violent, morally elevated, mutually affectionate, learn to cooperate voluntarily among themselves and show aversion to anti-social activities, then the society will be elevated to a higher plane of culture. Gandhi's vision of ideal society is nothing but an expression of his striving for a just and perfect society, i.e., the kingdom of righteousness on earth.

Gandhi firmly believes that history is steadily progressing towards ahimsa or non-violence. To support his belief, Gandhi offers a very convincing argument. He says:

If we turn our eyes to the time of which history has any record down to our time, we shall find that man has been steadily progressing towards ahimsa. Our remote ancestors were cannibals ... Next came a stage when ashamed of leading the life of a wandering hunter. He therefore took to agriculture ... Thus from being a nomad he settled down to civilized stable life, founded villages and towns, and from member of a family he became member of a community and a nation. All these are signs of progressive ahimsa and diminishing himsa. Had it been otherwise the human species should have been extinct by now, even as many of the lower-species have disappeared.<sup>39</sup>

If we accept that mankind has steadily progressed towards ahimsa till now, it follows that it has to progress still further and further, and raise itself from the human plane to the spiritual plane.

Gandhi accepts man's animal ancestry and says that, "in our present state, we are partly man and partly beasts."<sup>40</sup> He also admits Darwinism and asserts that "we have become men by a slow process of evolution from the brute."<sup>41</sup> The evolution of species carried forward man and placed him in the highest position in the cycle of creation. Though man is a rational animal, his nature is still dominated by beastly qualities in him, because the human species is still in the process of evolutionary development. Man is distinguished from the beast in his ceaseless striving to rise above the beast on the moral plane. Man is by nature going higher because of the spiritual elements

present in him. Gandhi, therefore, argues that man is superior to selfishness and violence, as these qualities belong to the beast, but not to the nature of man.

Gandhi's concept of Ramarajya stands for an egalitarian and non-violent democratic social order wherein moral values pervade all spheres of human life. Politically, it is a form of stateless society; socially, it is a form of classless society where all persons are equally treated irrespective of caste, colour, religion, sex and so on; and economically, it is a form of socialist society in which inequalities based on possession and non-possession vanish because all wealth belongs to the society as a whole.

Gandhi regards that man by his nature is consciously divine, rational and sociable, and therefore he has an inborn capacity to govern himself. He is for self-help and self-regulation in which the state is totally uncalled for. Inner freedom, for Gandhi, springs from self-control and self-purification. The law of 'dharma' and the morality of the individuals bind together the members of the society and make them to fulfill their social obligations. Dharma or social ethics exerts strong moral pressure on the individuals and sustains social cohesion. Each individual works for the 'greatest good of all', and the society will provide maximum opportunities to all individuals to develop their potentialities.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Violence and non-violence are the two natural impulses of all cerebral beings. These two distinct instincts have been inherited from nature. When compared to human species, the violent impulse is dominant and pervasive in beasts than in men. Thus man has his animal nature as well as the power of reason and judgment, which no other animal possesses. In the course of evolution, man has made continuous progress in the cultivation of non-violent tendencies in him.

Man, as a social being, understands that mutual assistance and cooperation with his fellow beings may render his life more easy and happy. So he has been able to build up his civilization and culture with the cooperation of his fellow beings. Human species, by applying reason and judgment, have been able to make astonishing progress. When the beastly qualities of human nature are suppressed, the scope of non-violence in man increases, and human society will be elevated to a higher plane. A civilization may be said to have advanced if it succeeds in controlling the animal passions of man. Violence is counter-productive, resulting in anger, hatred, jealousy, revenge and bloodshed. Therefore, non-violent means is the only alternative to eradicate the beastly and anti-social tendencies from the human mind,



and to elevate human society to a superior plane wherein the entire humanity can live in peace and harmony.

In spite of his admiration for the spirit of sacrifice of his communist friends, Gandhi could not accept their means, which involves violence. He says that, "if communism comes without any violence, it would be acceptable to him."<sup>42</sup> He appreciates the ethical ideal of communism and asserts that, "it means a classless society an ideal that is worth striving for. Only I part company with it when force is called to aid for achieving it."<sup>43</sup> He also accepts the Marxian principle of the distribution of goods 'to each according to his needs'. Thus, Gandhi differs from Marx mainly on the method and tactics of changing the present capitalist form of society into a socialist one.

The communists, on the other hand, consider Gandhi as the first and foremost anti-imperialist leader that India had produced. His struggle for national unity in the midst of diversity, his role in bringing the Indian untouchables to the center of the national conscience, his contribution in making Indian masses as fearless people, his urge for Hindu-Muslim unity, his impact on the Indian rural masses, are not ignored by the communist leaders.

While appreciating the outstanding qualities of Gandhi such as simplicity of life, quest for truth, honesty, courage, love of humanity, selfless service to the downtrodden etc., the communists mainly criticise Gandhi's gospel of non-violence, his method of satyagraha, his theory of trusteeship, change of heart, class collaboration etc., as reactionary ideas.

In spite of their opposition to Gandhi's creed of non-violence and his method of satyagraha, it is very strange to notice that the communists could not escape from the use of various techniques of satyagraha method in the movements organized by them at the practical level, both in the past and in the present.

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# Gandhi's India and Its Nuclear Bomb

Vishwanath Tandon

## ABSTRACT

*This article deals with the attitude of Gandhi towards the nuclear bomb as well as that of Jawaharlal Nehru and other prime ministers. It describes the circumstances of the first explosion in 1974, attitude of Vinoba and other Gandhians towards it and the reaction in Pakistan, later giving rise to a nuclear rivalry between the two countries. It then traces the results leading to India's second explosion in 1998 and then proceeds to explain why Gandhians could not prevent it and the real purpose behind the second explosion. It also touches upon the policy of deterrence, and finally it surmises what would have been the situation had Gandhi been allowed to live and proceed to Pakistan as decided upon to bring about amicable relationship between the two countries, in particular between their peoples, and its possible effect on China.*

THOUGH TECHNICALLY INDIA is outside the nuclear bomb club, it, along with Pakistan, had long been in possession of nuclear weapons. Before long, some other countries too may come to possess them. This article, however, deals only with India which, being the land of Gandhi, was expected by many pacifists to set an example before others of doing without nuclear weapons though confronted by two aggressive nuclear neighbours, China and Pakistan. Hence this article deals with the relevant ideas of Gandhi, the non-nuclear defence policy of Jawaharlal Nehru, the factors responsible for change in his policy and the probable scenario had Gandhi been allowed to live for some time more.

Gandhi was alive when the USA dropped the first atom bomb on Hiroshima on 5 August 1945. But his reaction could only become

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public when his *Harijan* weeklies were revived on 10 February 1946. He then said:

....There have been cataclysmic changes in the world. Do I still adhere to my faith in truth and nonviolence? Has not the atom bomb exploded that faith? Not only it has not done so but it has clearly demonstrated to me that the twins constitute the mightiest force in the world. Before it the atom bomb is of no effect. The two opposing forces are wholly different in kind, the one moral and spiritual, the other physical and material. The one is infinitely superior to the other which by its very nature has an end. The force of spirit is ever progressive and endless. Its full expression makes it unconquerable in the world. ...What is more, that force resides in everybody, man, woman and child, irrespective of the colour of the skin. Only in many it lies dormant, but it is capable of being awakened by judicious training.<sup>1</sup>

Then came another article, "Atom Bomb and Ahimsa". Therein he said: "....It has been suggested by American friends that the atom bomb will bring in ahimsa, as nothing else can. It will, if it meant that its destructive power will so disgust the world that it will turn it away from violence for the time being. This is very like a man glutting himself with dainties to the point of nausea and turning away from them only to return with redoubled zeal after the effect of nausea is well over."<sup>2</sup> He also wrote in it: "....So far as I can see, the atom bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained mankind for ages. There used to be the so-called laws of war which made it tolerable. Now we have the naked truth. War knows no law except that of might."<sup>3</sup> Hence he came to the conclusion: "....The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through nonviolence."<sup>4</sup>

He had also referred to nuclear energy then and said that the "....atomic energy though harnessed by American scientists and army men for destructive purposes may be utilized by other scientists for humanitarian purposes is undoubtedly within the realm of possibility. But that is not meant by my American friends."<sup>5</sup> It may be clarified here that when he wrote it, the world had not been aware of the various dangers involved in the production of nuclear energy with which now the world is quite familiar. Hence this statement of his should not be construed as his approval for it.

Then when in September that very year he was asked by a

British journalist for his opinion on the atom bomb, he said: "....O, on that point you can proclaim to the whole world without hesitation that I am beyond repair." And when further asked about its antidote and if it had not antiquated nonviolence, his reply was: "....No. It is the only thing that the atom bomb cannot destroy. I did not move a muscle when I first heard that the atom bomb has wiped out Hiroshima. On the contrary, I said to myself, 'unless the world adopts nonviolence, it will spell certain suicide for mankind.'"6

His last talk on the topic, and a very important one, had taken place a few hours before his being shot dead on 30 January. Margaret Bourke-White, a photographer of the American periodical *Life*, asked him, "How would you meet the atom bomb.....with nonviolence?" His reply was: "....I will not go underground. I will not go into a shelter. I will come out in the open and let the pilot see that I have not a trace of ill-will against him. The pilot will not see our faces from his great height, I know. But the longing in our hearts — that he will not come to harm — would reach up to him and his eyes would be opened." And then probably reading what was passing in her mind, he added: "....If those thousands who had been done to death in Hiroshima, if they had died with that prayerful action — died openly with that prayer in their hearts — their sacrifice would not have gone in vain."7

This thought of Gandhi was based on his intense faith in the eternal principle of nonviolence. He had said in 1946: "....Ahimsa is one of the world's great principles which no power on earth can wipe out. Thousands like myself may die to vindicate the ideal but ahimsa will never die. And the gospel of ahimsa can be spread only through believers dying for the cause."8 In this context, J.B. Kripalani also deserves to be quoted. He had once said: "....As many pioneering reformers and prophets had to suffer in the cause of establishing the moral law in civil life, so some nation must be prepared to suffer for the establishment of the moral law among nations."9

Such was the legacy of Gandhi's ideas on nuclear bomb to his countrymen and the world. And though his 'heir' Jawaharlal Nehru could not accept his nonviolence in toto, he was an advocate of peace and goodwill among the nations of the world. In his first broadcast on the All India Radio on 9 September 1946, he had said: "....We propose, as far as possible to keep away from power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars and which may again lead to disaster on an even vaster scale."10 He had also then looked forward to a cordial and cooperative relationship with Britain and Commonwealth countries, sympathised

with the subject countries struggling for their liberation from colonial domination and made friendly references to the USA, Soviet Union and China. Later, he had actively supported disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament with cessation of further nuclear tests as the first step. In this he later had the support of non-aligned countries and consequently the three nuclear countries - USA, UK and Soviet Union, had signed a Partial Test Ban Treaty in 1962, with many others signing it, India doing so at the fourth place.<sup>12</sup>

But Nehru was no pacifist. He had continued to maintain defence forces for territorial integrity of the country and had even used them in Kashmir, Hyderabad and Goa, for which he had been criticized by pacifists like A.J. Muste. But Gene Sharp has great praise for his policy of non-alignment. He wrote in 1965: "....There is little doubt that the world would have been a far more dangerous place in the past years except for the role which India played on the international scene. She by word and example helped to stop and reverse the tendency in the world to be polarized into two nuclear-armed Power Blocs. .... India's foreign policy and her policy of non-alignment made therefore a positive contribution to international relations in the past two decades, helping to prevent war and to ensure the survival of mankind."<sup>13</sup> It does not, however, mean that his application of the principle of non-alignment was flawless. The two examples of it were Hungary and Tibet. In the case of the latter he even paid dearly for his faith in the Chinese. Yet, he had been criticized for resisting China's occupation of some Indian border areas militarily. However, Gandhians like Vinoba and Kaka Kalelkar had defended Nehru and so also Gene Sharp who considered the resort to military defence as natural and unavoidable, since the people had not accepted the doctrines of nonviolence propounded by their exponents considering them to be unrealistic and incapable of dealing effectively with the problems of serious political conflicts and threats to freedom.<sup>14</sup>

However, Nehru was dead against making a nuclear bomb. Though at the instance of Homi Bhabha he had formed the Atomic Energy Commission, mandated to build and run nuclear power plants, he had declared in 1957 on the occasion of the Trombay nuclear reactor getting active: "....I should like to say, on behalf of myself and the Government of India, that whatever may happen or whatever be the circumstances, we shall never use the nuclear energy for evil purposes."<sup>15</sup> And he strictly adhered to it as long as he lived.

But the situation started changing after his death in May 1964 and China's first nuclear bomb test in October that year. The change first made itself felt when in December that year in a talk on universal nuclear disarmament on All India Radio Dr. Bhabha said that there

was no method to check midway any nuclear attack and that the only alternative was a capability and threat of retaliation. He also further said that "atomic weapons give the state possessing them in adequate numbers a deterrent power against attack from a much stronger state." This led to a resolution in Parliament for developing the nuclear bomb, which was, however, defeated by the Congress majority on Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri opposing it on the ground of its being "against the spirit of Gandhi and Nehru."<sup>16</sup> However, it appears that both Shastri and Bhabha were worried at the threat of Chinese intervention during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965 and assistance was sought from the USA at the top level and a nuclear-powered device was planted on the slopes of Nandadevi to watch the Chinese movements. This had been disclosed by Morarji Desai in the Parliament in April 1978, but it remains uncorroborated since both Shastri and Bhabha had died in 1966.<sup>17</sup>

Such was the state of affairs when Indira Gandhi became prime minister in 1966, and it was during her tenure that India tested her first nuclear device in May 1974. There seem to be several factors which made her do so. First, according to Atal Behari Vajpayee, "....Since 1968, all governments in India have acknowledged the need for keeping India's nuclear option open in view of the regional security environment."<sup>18</sup> Secondly, the threatening attitude of China during the East Pakistan War (1971) and the pro-Pakistan attitude of the US must have convinced Indira Gandhi of the need of developing nuclear bomb. Thirdly, in general elections following the liberation of Bangladesh, Indira Gandhi had in 1972 won a resounding victory on her slogan of *Garibi Hatao* (Remove Poverty), but the difficulties of the people were increasing and the people were getting restive. Hence, it is surmised that to win acclamation and to divert the attention of the people from her failure, she exploded the bomb, and as S. Nihal Singh observed, "....the railway strike and the country's numerous economic problems had suddenly disappeared from view."<sup>19</sup> Lastly, there was pressure from the scientists. According to Ramchandra Guha, "....For several years now scientists had been pressing the government to conduct an atomic test."<sup>20</sup> However, Indira had also declared that the test was for peaceful purposes.

The test had certainly won the popular approval, but the attitude of the Gandhians was somewhat divided over it. By now, there were two groups, those with Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) and those not with him. The rank and file of the former had been much impressed by the Western criticism of the explosion and a prominent person of that group had even criticized it so vehemently that Vinoba smelled



in it the influence of the American lobby while he regarded the criticism of another such person as 'balanced'.<sup>21</sup> He himself, however was of a different point of view. On being asked by an Orissa worker about his views when the world looked at it with suspicion and fear, something with which the questioner personally agreed, Vinoba dealt with it at some length. His reply may in short be presented thus: "I am a person who begins with faith in others and when Indiraji says that the explosion is for peaceful purposes, I believe her. Like any other form of energy, nuclear energy too can be used both for good and bad purposes. Baba can go on a fast unto death if a nuclear bomb be made and you too can do likewise. But there is no question of beginning with lack of faith in her."<sup>22</sup> One finds here a resemblance between his and Gandhi's approach on the question of nuclear energy. However, the seventies differed from the forties of the century. By the 70s, the world had become more aware of the dangers posed by the nukes, and some important Gandhians who knew about it, apprised Vinoba of it later and he never perhaps talked of it again, and by the time India's nuclear bomb really came into existence Vinoba had died in 1982.

One serious consequence of this explosion was that Pakistan too felt the necessity of having a nuclear bomb of its own and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was in power there then, decided to make it at all costs, and Pakistan started working on it with determination and silently. Bhutto's successor General Zia-ul-Haq even declared it to be an "Islamic Bomb."<sup>23</sup> As against it, the various prime ministers after Indira Gandhi had varying attitudes towards the bomb. Morarji Desai was not in favour of it. Rajiv Gandhi is said to be in the know of the Pakistan's bomb, but he did nothing except drawing repeated attention of the US towards Pakistan's bomb. Vishwanath Pratap Singh took interest and appointed Raja Ramanna, who had played the chief role in the 1974 explosion, as State Minister of Defence. But his tenure did not last long and it was left to Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao to take an interest in it, grant funds for it and to order its testing in 1995 and 1996. But the preparations for it were noticed by the satellites and there was such a hue and cry over it in the West that he had to drop the idea.<sup>24</sup>

H.D. Deve Gowda accorded priority to economic development and though he was not afraid of the US, he did nothing for the bomb. I.K. Gujral felt that non-signing the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) provided enough security to India and thus it was left to Atal Behari Vajpayee to explode the device thrice in the second week of May 1998, taking enough care of the satellites. The immediate incentive was provided by Pakistan itself which named its medium-

range missile "Ghauri" after Sultan Muhammad Ghori who had conquered northern India in the last decade of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is reported to have laid waste much part of it. That missile was fired in April 1998 and after a few days Vajpayee is reported to have given permission for the explosion done next month in May, the first day test taking place again on the birthday of Lord Buddha.<sup>25</sup>

It was a great gamble and the backlash, not unexpected, was swift and ferocious. But India had its compulsions. According to Manoj Joshi, "....It is the China factor that converted an article of faith into a policy imperative. A spate of information leaked to the American media in 1995-96 underlined the alarming extent of China's military cooperation with Pakistan, especially in missile technology. Equally disturbing from India's point of view were signs that far from containing China, the US has been drawing it in closer embrace...After a visit to Beijing last month (April 1998), Acting Secretary of State John Holum certified that China's proliferation activities were no longer a problem."<sup>26</sup> As far as Pakistan was concerned it was merely waiting for an opportunity to demonstrate its possession of the bomb. Abdul Qadeer Khan had been reported to have said: "....We can conduct a nuclear test at very short notice. ....like a cook I am waiting for Government's instructions."<sup>27</sup> And within two weeks after India's test, Pakistan exploded its nuclear device on 28 May, which Khan claimed to be "more consistent, more compact, more advanced and more reliable than what the Indians have."<sup>28</sup> Ramchandra Guha observes: "....Their (Pakistan's) atomic programme had been built on the basis of designs and materials acquired in dubious circumstances from a Dutch laboratory by the scientist A.Q. Khan supplemented by the Chinese technological help. The Indian bomb was wholly indigenous."<sup>29</sup>

Like Indira Gandhi, Vajpayee had also made it clear that the bomb was meant for peaceful purposes. In an interview after the explosion he had clarified that his nuclear explosion was in the interest of national security and that in a world wherein India is surrounded by nuclear weaponry no responsible government could formulate a security policy disregarding ground realities. However, he had also assured that it would never be a weapon of aggression.<sup>30</sup> It was no dishonest statement. India has no imperialistic designs and then there is the Gandhian legacy primarily based on India's culture itself. As compared to Indira Gandhi's, Vajpayee government's explosion had a far more popular support. An opinion poll survey after the explosion had recorded 87 percent for with 12 percent against.<sup>31</sup> This approval, one can well assume, was based on the conviction that the bomb was

only being developed as a deterrent.

Though the policy of deterrence is open to much criticism, it does not lack supporters. P.T. Raju, a reputed professor of Philosophy had said in an article titled "Gandhian Way and Nuclear War": "....None will deny that the fear of national extermination has been preventing wars between major powers. ....Fear has been acting as a check.... The truth is that in a pragmatic world, man's essential goodness cannot be as much relied upon as his fear of extinction, (and) this truth holds good not only in the case of individuals but also in the case of nations."<sup>32</sup> Similarly, General Andre Beaufre, who was the Director of the French Institute of Strategic Studies, says in his book *Deterrence and Strategy*: "....The appearance of nuclear weaponry, initially considered as an evil thing, provides us with an unexpected solution, for it is emerging more and more as the most powerful stabilizer man has ever known since the dawn of time."<sup>33</sup> Even such a person as Father Dominique Pire appear to support deterrence when he says in an article titled "Gandhi in the Year 2000": "....Certain friends who are set on nonviolence reproach me, saying I do not know, nonviolence well enough, and assure me nonviolence will disarm violence. Personally, I am not sure of it for all cases. And even if violence is an evil, situations are sometimes so unjust, and affect human beings who are so weak in the face of others who are so strong, that I am in doubt."<sup>34</sup> To Gandhi nonviolence was a matter of intense faith and his method of facing it was such that only a few can adopt it.

It may also be pointed out here that by the time of 1998 test, all eminent Gandhians had passed away and the next rank Gandhians did not have the necessary stature to influence the public mind. This reminds one of Einstein who when urged by a Hindu correspondent to resort to hunger-strike to prevent the USA from making the hydrogen bomb, had replied saying that "knowing the mentality of the American people," the action would not have a desired effect. It would the contrary, be considered as an expression of unpardonable arrogance."<sup>35</sup>

As is evident, the immediate factor behind the 1998 explosion was nuclear Pakistan. There had been a view that since Pakistan could never match the military strength of India, it would never have dared to use its nuclear bomb against it. This view does not accord with human nature. A weak person with a dagger when fighting a stronger adversary without it is likely to use it against him as a last resort or even as the first one. Hence India could not overlook the existence of a nuclear Pakistan. All the more so, with the unsolved problem of Kashmir between them, both sides have

their own compulsions. While Pakistan feels itself incomplete without it, India cannot afford a second partition of the country which would open the old wounds which are healing. Even Vinoba had said in 1964: "...We agreed to the Partition out of the compulsions of circumstances and we do not want to undo history. But if we look upon Kashmir as a Muslim majority area and hence entitled to secede thinking that is not proper for it to remain with India, we would be repeating the old mistake after some fifteen years or so."<sup>36</sup> He saw the solution of the Kashmir problem in a confederation between the two countries brought about by love, not force.<sup>36</sup>

So much about India going nuclear. Now a question arises what would have been the state of affairs had Gandhi been allowed to live longer, even if not up to the age of 120, he had once hoped for? There are grounds to hold that in that case the relations between India and Pakistan would have been such as to eliminate any need of nuclear bombs against each other. As is well-known, Gandhi was very keen to go to Pakistan to harmonize the relations between the two countries and their peoples. But his visit to Pakistan could only have been meaningful if there was peace between the two communities, Hindus and Muslims, in India. He had worked for it before Partition in Noakhali, Bihar and Calcutta (Kolkata). And now after the Partition, the main centre of turmoil was Delhi. Hence he was concentrating on it and having faith in himself had deputed two Parsi friends to Pakistan's interim capital, Karachi, to prepare grounds for his visit. The two emissaries, Jehangir P. Patel and Dr Dinshaw Mehta, had reached Karachi on 10 January 1948, and it was during talks with some Cabinet members of the Pakistan Government that they came to know of Gandhi's fast which had begun on the 13<sup>th</sup>. He, however, had asked them by a wire "to continue their work, remembering that he himself was 'in God's hands.'"<sup>37</sup>

The two emissaries had plunged themselves in negotiations from the 11<sup>th</sup> in which on their side Sri Prakasa, the India's High Commissioner in Pakistan, and Shaheed Suhrawardy, Gandhi's partner in Calcutta peace-keeping, played active roles. Sri Prakasa had received his lawyer's training under Jinnah and had been appointed High Commissioner there at the wish of Jinnah himself. He had the confidence of Nehru as well. Another person also associated with them was Jamshed Mehta, an old prominent citizen of Karachi and a Khadi-wearer, who used to see Jinnah daily to acquaint him with the conditions in the refugee camps. On Pakistan's side were (Jogesh) Mandal, an untouchable leader, also played a friendly role saying "...You want peace and so do we. I'll help you."

He seems to have been impressed by the fact that they represented Gandhi and not the Government of India.

On coming to know of Gandhi's fast, the two emissaries approached Jinnah and suggested that a message from him assuring Gandhi of his cooperation in putting an end to violence might induce Gandhi to terminate the fast. This led to the drafting of a telegram urging Gandhi "to live and work for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity in the two dominations" and promising that Jinnah would do all he could to promote the cause. The telegram was duly handed over to the Indian High Commission for being dispatched to Delhi, the Pakistan High Commissioner in Delhi conveying its gist to Gandhi while calling on him during the fast. Dinshaw and Jehangir returned to Delhi on the 18<sup>th</sup>, accompanied by Jamshed Mehta on behalf of the Government of Pakistan. The next day the three told Gandhi of the conditions on which Jinnah was prepared to go ahead with preparations for his visit. They included Gandhi asking the people of India and the members of the Government of India to accept the fact of Partition as settled and to refrain from talking of the possible re-union of the two and also to use his influence for the fulfillment of the financial agreement. These conditions presented no difficulties, since Gandhi had never talked of re-union and the payment of 55 crores to Pakistan had already been decided upon in principle. Then they returned to Karachi for further negotiations.

Then there was another hurdle. Pakistan Government was insistent on providing police escort to Gandhi during his movements in Pakistan, an issue on which Gandhi was very sensitive. So again all the three, including Jamshed Mehta, returned to India to seek Gandhi's approval to it. Jehangir Patel cited an old statement of Gandhi to get his approval. It was that a guest cannot prescribe 'condition' to his host. Gandhi did not accept its validity but said to Jamshed Mehta: "...let it be. I do not wish for any 'protection', and I do not agree with Jehangir in this matter. But I do want to go to Pakistan and I have made Jehangir my emissary in this matter. So I should support him. I will accept his decision, even though I do not share his view". Having thus secured his approval, the three then returned to Karachi on the 27<sup>th</sup>, and 8 or 9 February were fixed as the tentative dates for Gandhi's arrival. But before they could leave for Delhi to apprise Gandhi of it, the news of his having been shot dead reached them. In the words of the authors, "...Himself weeping openly and ashamedly, Abdul Rab Nishtar arranged for Gandhi's two stricken friends to get back to Delhi by the first available plane".

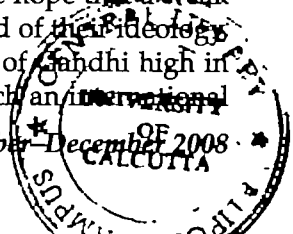
A transformation seems to have taken place in Jinnah after his attainment of Pakistan. His address to the Pakistan Constituent Assembly on 11 August 1947 was the first indications of it. In that famous speech, he had said: "....If you change your past and work together in the spirit that every one of you, no matter to what community he belongs, is first, second and last a citizen of this state with equal rights .... there will be no end to the progress you will make. ....We should begin to work in that spirit and in (the) course of time all these angularities of the majority and the minority communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community .... will vanish."<sup>38</sup> According to Khaliquzzaman, Jinnah in it bade "good bye to his two nation theory,"<sup>39</sup> and in the words Merriums: "The preservation of national unity, which had been one of Gandhi's primary goals before Partition, became a major objective of Jinnah after Partition."<sup>40</sup>

Jinnah was also not inimical to the two Dominions jointly functioning on defence. In March 1948 when there was bitterness between the two Dominions on Kashmir, he had said in reply to a question of a foreign correspondent if Pakistan and India would cooperate against any outside aggression, Jinnah's reply was: "...Personally, I have no doubt in my mind that it is of vital importance to Pakistan and India as independent sovereign states to collaborate ... to defend their frontiers. But this depends entirely on whether Pakistan and India can resolve their own differences in the first instance. ....If we can put our house in order internally, we may be able to play a great part externally in all international affairs."<sup>41</sup>

There is a lot of evidence in the books of some contemporaries which creates an impression that if Gandhi had been allowed to visit Pakistan, it would have inaugurated a new era of amicable relationship between the two countries, with Jinnah playing a friendly role. He with Gandhi would have constituted what is termed as "eleven" and their joint efforts should have been able to lessen much of the animosity created in this sub-continent between the Hindus and Muslims during the decade of the 40s in the last century.

However, it is difficult to say so of China because of its imperialistic ambition and faith in violence. The Indian communists had never been able to reconcile themselves with Gandhi and their support to the demand of Pakistan was born of the hope that a weak Pakistan would provide a better field for the spread of their ideology, a hope which was believed. Yet, with the prestige of Gandhi high in the international world, there might have been such an international

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pressure on China as to make her modify her inclination towards violence and change her approach towards the neighbouring countries. But one must admit that it is a "might-have-been" of history and nothing can be said with any certainty.

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15. Cited in U.R. Rao, "Nehru on India and the Bomb" *Gandhi Marg*, January 1966 and October 1965, p. 265.
16. Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi* (New Delhi: Picador, 2007), pp. 390-91. Dr. Bhabha is also resorted to have said on some occasion: "We must have the ability, we must prove ourselves and then talk of Gandhi, nonviolence and a world without nuclear weapons." (Cited in the *Times of India* Special Issue of 15 August 2007 on the completion of 60 Years of Indian Independence, p. 4.). According to Homer A. Jack, Lal Bahadur Shastri's stand on the Bomb lacked certainty. He writes: "Prime Minister Shastri refused to open the Indian door to the military use of atomic energy, but he did not close it for ever. There was always a 'for the present' clause

- with a question mark on the duration of that present." See his "An Alternative to the Indian Bomb" *Gandhi Marg*, January 1966, p. 8.
17. Mentioned in the *India Today* of 14 April 2008, p. 9.
  18. An interview in *India Today* of 25 May 1998, p. 39.
  19. Guha, op.cit., pp. 457-461 and 480-81.
  20. Ibid., p. 673. Indira too had not been free of such a pressure. Guha acknowledges it indirectly.
  21. *Vinoba-Sannidhi* (1974), a special issue of *The Hindi* monthly *Maitri* of 15 November 1995, p. 68.
  22. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
  23. Zia-Mian, "A Thousand-Year War with Ourselves" in *Outlook*, 23 July 2001, pp. 16-17. A marginal note on p. 17 also says that Abdul Qadeer Khan had said in 1987, "Pakistan possesses a nuclear bomb."
  24. *India Today*, 25 May 1998, gives a short history of the Indian nuclear bomb and it has been found useful in writing this article.
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  37. This and the following matter concerning Gandhi's proposed visit to Pakistan is based on Jehangir P. Patel and Marjorie Sykes, *Gandhi: His Gift of the Fight* (Rasulia, Friends Rural Centre, 1967), Chapter XII. Patel was one of Gandhi's emissary sent to Pakistan for his tour there.
  38. Rajmohan Gandhi, *Understanding the Muslim Mind* (Penguin Books, 1987), p. 178.
  39. Ibid.
  40. Ibid.
  41. Ibid., p. 185.
- A Study by an Indian Muslim Scholar, Dr Ajeet Jawed's *Jinnah: Secular and Nationalist*, tells us, according to a review article, that later, Jinnah told Mountbatten that he did not want Pakistan and



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he would be content with an honourable settlement with the Congress in a united India. Mountbatten snubbed him and said that it was too late to think of as an alternative. He also tells us that Jinnah even wanted to return to India. (*The Week*, 6 November 2005, p. 74).

42. There are some contemporary accounts which throw a flood of light on Jinnah's life in Pakistan during his last years. Three of them may be mentioned here. They are: 1. Sri Prakasa, *Pakistan: Birth and Early Days*, 2. M.S.M. Sharma, *A Peep into Pakistan*; and 3. Ilahi Baksh, *With the Quaid-i-Azam During His Last Days*. Dr Ilahi Baksh was Jinnah's physician.

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# Gandhi and Women: A Gender Perspective

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## ABSTRACT

*When Mahatma Gandhi became active in public life, the women of India faced contradictory values. They were regarded as originators of life and divine on the one hand, and victims of ignorance, illiteracy and superstition on the other. They were also regarded as inferior to men and expected to remain under legal and customary subjection of their husbands and male relatives. Mahatma Gandhi opposed evil practices such as child marriage, illiteracy, dowry, purdah, sati, molestation, permanent widowhood and prostitution. He advocated equal rights for women and asked parents to treat their sons and daughters alike. He also asked husbands to treat their wives as equals. Mahatma Gandhi projected the view that women are equal to men as the same 'atma' or soul dwells in both. In fact he did not stop at equality, but also considered women to be superior to men in some aspects as women had more capacity for self-suffering and non-violence. He gave women the opportunity to play a positive role in the national life which resulted in removing the perception of women as having qualities relevant exclusive to the private sphere.*

## Introduction

GENDER IS DEFINED AS the social construction of relations between women and men. It is not the same as sex, for sex connotes a biological difference between male and female whereas gender is a socially constructed category. As Simon de Beauvoir maintains 'one is not born but rather made a woman'. The concept of gender thus explains the division of spheres of action into private female and public male. This public-private dichotomy results in marginalisation of the female in all spheres of life- social, economic and political. In traditional

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patriarchal societies, it is generally believed that women should remain confined to their families and under the legal and customary subjection of their husbands. This was also the belief in pre-independent India when Gandhi gave a totally new perspective regarding the role of Indian women.

When Mahatma Gandhi became active in public life in India the women of India faced contradictory values emerging from the Indian society. On the one hand woman was regarded as originator, divine, mark of prosperity and a marvel of creation. On the other hand she was a victim of ignorance, illiteracy, superstition, and evil and degrading customs. However, to Gandhi, women were not inferior to men. To him women were the embodiment of soul force. To him women were suffering and self-sacrifice personified. He tried to transmit her self-sacrificing suffering into 'shakti' (power).<sup>1</sup> He did not regard women as inferior to men. In fact in some aspects he believed women to be superior to men.

### **Women as Equal to Men**

Gandhi believed that women should not regard themselves as dependent, weak or helpless because they are not helpless when they are really pure. Their purity makes them conscious of their strength.<sup>2</sup> Subscribing to the divine equality of men and women Gandhi said that the same 'atma' (soul) dwells in the body of men as well as the body of women. Since soul is sexless, men and women are perfectly equal in the eyes of God, who does not differentiate between men and women, and in no case does discriminate against the latter.<sup>3</sup> He wanted every husband to treat his wife essentially as an 'ardhangini' and 'sahadharmini' (the helpmate).<sup>4</sup> Since the husband and the wife are complimentary to each other and wife is like a comrade of her husband, the wife has the right to the same freedom, which the husband seeks for himself. Both have meaningful role to play in the family and social system. Women should have the right to participate in the very minutest detail in the activities of men. A husband cannot compel his wife to go to cinema against her wishes or if she wishes to go out by herself, he cannot prevent her. He further emphasized that husband and wife are like two wheels of a carriage and if one wheel of a carriage remains in a working condition, but the other goes out of order, the carriage will not run properly.<sup>5</sup>

Gandhi wished that in social, economic and political spheres women should be given full protection. He also recommended equal remuneration for women.<sup>6</sup> In his Ashram, he offered equal facilities to both men and women inmates as this model regenerated not only peace and harmony but also better output in training selfless

'satyagrahis'. He believed that women are gifted with equal mental capacities and have the same right of freedom and liberty to participate in the minutest details of the activities of men.

Gandhi said that since men and women were equal, women must cease to consider themselves the object of men's lust. Women should neither adorn to please their husbands and much less to attract others, nor consider themselves subordinate and inferior to men. Gandhi wanted men and women to enjoy absolute equality in public life and believed that women should suffer no legal disabilities. He wanted women to have voting right and equal status as men.<sup>7</sup>

### **Women as Superior to Men**

Gandhi considered women not only equal to men, but in many ways superior to them. He always accorded a high value to the qualities of suffering and sacrifice. To him bravery lay in dying and not in killing.<sup>8</sup> To him in the courage of self-sacrifice women are superior to men and in a non-violent struggle women could make greater contribution than men because non-violence calls for suffering, and women could suffer more purely and nobly than men.<sup>9</sup> He declared that to call women a weaker sex is a libel and a gross injustice. If by strength is meant brute strength then indeed women are inferior to men.<sup>10</sup> But if by strength is meant moral power, then women are immeasurably superior to men. Gandhi believed when women do a thing in the right spirit, they could move mountains. He also looked at them as embodiments of renunciation and compassion and believed that they could play a greater part than men in India's non-violent struggle for 'swaraj' (self rule).<sup>11</sup> He was of the view that women have greater power of endurance, hence greater courage. Without them men cannot be. He believed that if non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with women, for who can make a more effective appeal to the heart than women.<sup>12</sup> He called women the incarnation of 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) and added that women should occupy their proud position by the side of men. Women should teach the art of peace to the warring world.

### **Women as Different from Men**

Gandhi realised that men and women are equal in status, but not identical.<sup>13</sup> The acceptance of the different fields of activities for men and women presupposes that they are fundamentally different from each other. There must be a definite division of labour between man and woman as the former is the breadwinner while the latter is the caretaker and the distributor of bread. He believed that men and women are by nature quite different from each other; hence the

vocation of the two must be different, and the duty of motherhood, which the vast majority of women will always undertake requires qualities that men generally do not possess.<sup>14</sup> He explained that women have plenty of work in their own homes. They should attend to the bringing up of their children; give peace to the husband when he returns home tired; minister to him; soothe him if he is angry and do any work they can, staying at home. However he would not restrict women to household management. He would like them to make their contribution in every field of society.

### **Regeneration of Women**

Gandhi believed that the lot of women needs regeneration and removing the blemishes from shastras should do this. Women themselves will have to take up this task<sup>15</sup> and such women should be as pure, firm and self-controlled as Damayanti and Draupadi. He believed that women should not be treated as dolls or slaves so that the social body could be taken out of social paralysis.<sup>16</sup>

He was of the view that education will awaken in the minds of women a consciousness of their present condition by sharpening their intellect and increasing their capacity of doing well. It will enable women to assert their natural rights; exercise them wisely and work for their expansion. However he did not want them to ape the manner of the West but must apply methods suited to the Indian genius and environment.<sup>17</sup>

### **Education for Women**

Gandhi claimed that lack of education and information is the root cause of all the evils against women.<sup>18</sup> He believed that a human being without education is not far removed from an animal; hence education is as necessary for women as it is for men.<sup>19</sup> He believed that low level of literacy among women had deprived them of socio-political power and also the power of knowledge, and education is the most important instrument for bringing about the desired changes. He also believed that many books are full of innocent pleasure and this pleasure will be denied to women without education. He stood for proper education for women, as he believed that after receiving education they would become sensitive to the glaring inequalities to which they are subjected.<sup>20</sup> Many women's education centres came up in different parts of the country due to Gandhi's views and women were admitted to the centers for higher education.

He also believed that home life is entirely the sphere of women and they ought to have more knowledge regarding domestic affairs and upbringing of children. Hence courses of instruction should be

based on an appreciation of basic roles of men and women.

During his early years Gandhi was in a dilemma whether English education was necessary for Indian women. Later he came to the conclusion that in the ordinary course of lives neither Indian men nor women need necessarily have any knowledge of English.<sup>21</sup> However, he realised that English is necessary for making a living and for active association in political movements. So he advised that the few women who may require or desire to have English education can very easily have their way by joining the schools for men.<sup>22</sup> He accepted that the rich treasure of English literature should be opened alike to men and women. He did not intend to close these treasures for women while keeping them open for men. He believed that there is none on earth able to prevent women from studying the literature of the whole world if women are of literary taste. But felt that when courses of education are framed with the needs of a particular society, one cannot supply the requirements of the few who have cultivated a literary taste.

### **Women and Property Rights**

Gandhi realised that the property laws in British India were against women. However he felt that most women are married and are co-sharers in their husband's power and privilege in spite of the law being against them. He believed that women delighted in being ladies or wives of particular lords and enjoyed certain privileges as such. Therefore they may vote for radical reform in academic discussion over inequalities, but when it comes to acting up to their vote they will be unwilling to part with their privileges. He also clarified that millions of men have no property to transmit to prosperity. The real property that parents can transmit equally to their children is character and extension of educational facilities.

### **Women and Economic Activity**

Gandhi was deeply pained to witness the spectre of the stark poverty of a very great majority of his countrymen. In order to find a solution for this problem as also to revolutionize life in the villages, he presented the economy of the spinning wheel and supported 'Khadi' as a supplement to and co-extensive with agriculture. He was convinced that the loss of the spinning wheel brought about India's slavery and its voluntary revival will lead to its freedom. In his view women were best suited to take up spinning and the propagation of 'khadi'.<sup>23</sup> According to him, for the middle class, it should supplement the income of the family, and for the very poor women it should undoubtedly be a means of livelihood. He further added spinning

wheel should be the widows loving companion. Every yard of khaddar sold would mean a few coppers in the hands of poor women.<sup>24</sup>

Gandhi did not favour women going out of their homes for livelihood as he regarded their duties at home as important as men's duty to earn. He wanted women to do work without disturbing home. He wanted them to take up some work, which would supplement the earning of the family; spinning, according to him was perhaps the best work they would undertake. Apart from supplementing the family income, it could go a long way in bringing about a total metamorphosis in the lives of women.<sup>25</sup>

He was also of the view that 'charkha' will enable women to safeguard their virtue. Thus he recommended it especially to the fallen women and pleaded with them to turn a new leaf in their lives.<sup>26</sup> However, he was not against economic independence of women. He did not agree with the view that economic independence of women would lead to the spread of immorality among them and disrupt domestic life. He asked: "Has not independence of man and his holding property led to the spread of immorality among men? If you answer 'yes' then let it be so also with women. And when women have rights of ownership and the rest like men, it would be found that the enjoyment of such rights is not responsible for their vices or their virtues. Morality, which depends upon the helplessness of a man or woman, has not much to recommend it. Morality is rooted in the purity of our hearts".<sup>27</sup> He also felt that each woman must have the courage to ask her man how he earns his money and refuse to accept what is not earned in an honest way.

### Marriage

Gandhi generally believed in the form and purpose of marriage as envisaged in the Hindu religion. He did not have a theory of marriage that was inconsistent with the belief in transmigration, rebirth or mukti. To him the aims of Hindu marriage are three: dharma, praja (progeny) and rati (pleasure). He assigned the first place to spirituality, second to service, third to family consideration and social order, and the fourth place to mutual attraction or love.<sup>28</sup> At the same time he felt that a marriage where there is no love should equally be ruled out even though all the other conditions are fully complied with. Since the begetting of offspring is the central purpose of marriage, eugenic fitness cannot be treated as a condition of marriage.<sup>29</sup> He said if we regard marriage as a sacrament then there is room in it only for one offspring and that is why in our 'shastras' the first offspring is described as 'dharmaj' (duly born), all subsequent issues

being referred to as 'kamaj' (lust-born).<sup>30</sup> He believed marriage to be a natural thing in life and believed that to consider it derogatory in any sense is wrong. He believed that if marriage is a sacrament then one must lead a life of self-restraint in the married state.<sup>31</sup> He was opposed to compulsion in the choice of life companions. He advised the people to take consent of the girls in this regard and allowed the girls to resist marriage against their will in every legitimate manner.

### **Husband and Wife**

Gandhi's ideal of a wife was Sita and of a husband Rama. He realised that in India husbands and wives know nothing of one another when they are married. Religious sanctions fortified by customs and the even flow of the lives of the married people keep the peace in the vast majority of the Hindu households.<sup>32</sup> To him, in the relation between husband and wife, the wife is not the slave of the husband, but his comrade, otherwise known as his better half, his colleague and friend. The wife has a perfect right to take her own course and face the consequences when she knows herself to be in the right and when her resistance is for a noble purpose.<sup>33</sup> The wife is a co-sharer of husband with equal rights and equal duties. Their obligation towards each other and towards the world must therefore be same and reciprocal. A wife is not bound to be an accomplice in her husband's crimes, and when she holds anything to be wrong she must dare to do the right. If the husband is a God, the wife is also a Goddess. If a husband is unjust to his wife, she has the right to live separately as married life is intended to promote mutual good both here and hereafter. It is meant to serve humanity.<sup>34</sup> When one partner breaks the law of discipline, the right accrues to the other of breaking the bond. The breach here is moral and not physical. It precludes divorce. The wife or the husband separates but to serve the end for which they had united.

### **Women as Mothers**

Gandhi held married life as well as motherhood to be a religious duty. He did not regard ideal motherhood as an easy task. He believed that procreation of children has to be undertaken with full sense of responsibility. The mother should know about her duty from the moment she conceives.<sup>35</sup> He also held that the future of India lies on the knees of mothers as they nurture the future generation.<sup>36</sup> Mother can bring up the children to become simple, God-fearing and brave men and women. He felt hurt when he realized that the majority of the girls are not aware of duties of motherhood.



### **Widow Remarriage**

Gandhi made a distinction among child widows, voluntary adult widows and enforced adult widows.<sup>37</sup> He was deeply concerned about the state and the conditions of child widows. He treated an unmarried girl and a child widow at par. Although he was more sympathetic towards the latter who were customarily denied the right to remarry and also suffered several other social and legal disabilities than the former who could live a respectable life even if they decided to remain unmarried. He wanted all the child widows to re-marry because they suffered from a number of social disabilities. He said, if there be even one child widow the wrong demands redress.<sup>38</sup> To him the use of the term 'widow' for a girl was a violent abuse of a name that had sacred associations.<sup>39</sup>

About the adult widows, he felt that the decision to remarry should rest with the widows. Yet he never advocated widow remarriages on a wholesale scale. He held voluntary widowhood in high esteem. According to him the word 'widow' in Hinduism has a sacred odour.<sup>40</sup> He declared himself to be a worshipper of a true widow. However he was against the wrong done to the widows. His crusade was not against widowhood, but against its atrocious caricature. He protested against the prevalent belief that a widow denotes ill luck and that a widow crossing one's path is a bad omen. He did not consider it inauspicious to see a widow; rather considered it to be his good fortune to see a widow in the early hours of the day. He regarded her blessing to be a great boon.<sup>41</sup> He regarded enforced widowhood as an unbearable yoke that defiles the home by secret vice and degrades religion.<sup>42</sup> He advised no marriages before the girl is fifteen, remarriage of all young widows, and respect of and facilities to all widows in the family.<sup>43</sup>

He advised that the widow and the widower should be treated on par. He did not consider remarriage of adult widows a sin but his preference was certainly for them to lead a celibate life. He endorsed the sentiments of the widow who would devote her life to the sacred memory of the deceased partner for it is purer than the pleasure of married life.<sup>44</sup>

### **Child Marriage**

Gandhi believed that child marriage is one where the marriage of the girl takes place before menstruation commences. He objected to such marriages, for these were devoid of the element of consent on the part of the concerned boy as well as the girl.<sup>45</sup> He believed that both the boy and the girl should be developed physically and mentally

at the time of marriage and that they should have a voice in the choice of their life partner. He lamented that due to ignorance daughters are married off at an age when they are able only to sit on the lap and play.<sup>46</sup> He regarded this fault of the parents as equivalent of criminal indifference for they kept their daughters utterly ignorant and illiterate and brought them up only for the purpose of marriage.<sup>47</sup> He looked at the practice of child marriage as a moral and physical evil. He thought it was a sin and a crime both against God and men, and condemned it in his writings and speeches. To him to give religious sanction to the brutal custom of child marriage was most irreligious as it made innocent girls objects of man's lust, ruined the health of many a child mother and converted tender aged girls into widows.<sup>48</sup>

Gandhi was also against child marriage because it came in the way of the progress of women. They were married off and expected to bear and rear children at an early age when they should in fact be going to the school. He said women could not make any progress so long as there are child marriages. He perceived child marriage as the bane of the society marring its educational, physical and economic progress. He believed that it led to semi-starvation, malnutrition, and lack of medical aid and resulted in higher maternal mortality. Educational opportunities were denied to girls due to child marriage and they were made economically subservient to their husbands. For Gandhi child marriage was not only a moral and social evil, but also an obstacle even in the way of 'swaraj'. He tagged this issue with the struggle for freedom and attacked the customs by appealing to the nationalistic feeling of the people.<sup>49</sup> He fully supported the 'Child Marriage Restraint Bill' despite opposition from the orthodox sections of the society. He also advocated opening of special institutions like 'mahilashram' (house for women) for young girls who fell victims to the evil design of such greedy men or were sold by their parents for the sake of a paltry sum of money. He suggested that the parents who indulge in child marriage should do some 'prayschita' (penance) for this sinful and criminal act.<sup>50</sup> He favoured not only the rescuing of such girls but was prepared to arrange new matches for them because marriage under duress was no marriage but rape. He urged people even to disobey all that are in 'smritis' as far as this issue was concerned. He advised all social reformers and especially women to go ahead in their mission of mercy to the victims of this customs.

### **Equality between Boys and Girls**

Gandhi was against the institutions of female infanticide. He tried to find out the reason why people differentiate between the birth of a

boy and a girl and why their responses were so divergent in the two cases.<sup>51</sup> He was shocked to find that the birth of a girl was generally unwelcome as there was no practice of keeping the girl in the parents family for her lifetime, and at some stage she was to be married off to live with her parents-in-law. The second important reason for female infanticide was the custom of dowry, due to which girls were considered a burden or liability.<sup>52</sup> Gandhi was clearly of the view that one should rejoice whether it is the birth of a boy or a girl and both should be equally dear to the parents. The world certainly needs both and one is complementary to the other. To rejoice at the birth of one and to feel depressed at the birth of the other benefits neither. He made no distinction between a son and a daughter and believed that either of them be welcomed alike.<sup>53</sup>

### Purdah

Gandhi regarded 'purdah' (veil) as inhuman and immoral for it impeded the march towards 'swaraj' by restricting women.<sup>54</sup> Purdah not only denied freedom, but also the free gifts of God like light and fresh air to women. He considered it of recent origin and a result of the decline of Hindus. He objected to the purdah system for he believed that it weakened women's morality.<sup>55</sup> It cripples not only the free movement of women but interferes with their advancement and their capacity for doing useful work for society. He realised that it retarded the personality of women and did not let it blossom. He did not agree to the point of view that purdah is helpful in preserving chastity. He opined that it partly accounts for our own weakness, indecision, narrowness and helplessness. Moreover he believed that chastity is not a hothouse growth. It cannot be super imposed. The surrounding wall of purdah cannot protect it. It must grow from within and to be worth anything it must be capable of withstanding every unsought temptation. It must be as defiant as that of Sita, and women resorting to purdah must be very poor things that cannot stand the gaze of men.<sup>56</sup> Men must be able to trust their women folk even as the latter are compelled to trust them. We should not live with one limb completely or partially paralyzed.

He refused to accept the argument that veil protects the women morally and physically. Rather he believed that it generates feelings of insecurity and inferiority in women and results in deterioration of their health.<sup>57</sup> The prevalence of purdah pained him deeply but what made him sadder still was that even educated families did not have the courage to reject the custom.

He appealed to the public in general and women in particular to tear down purdah with one mighty effort.<sup>58</sup> He felt that removal of

purdah was also necessary for healthy competition with other nations. He firmly believed that it is not purdah but purity, which works as a shield and gives protection to the women against a man with malicious intentions. He was sure that abolition of purdah would lead to mass education for both men and women and would help women in gaining strength and becoming active participants in the struggle for swaraj.<sup>59</sup>

### **Dowry**

Gandhi believed that the custom of dowry turned young girls, meant to be queens of homes, into mere chattels to be bought and sold. He called this system pernicious, which greatly lowered the status of women, destroyed their sense of equality with men and defiled the pure character of the institution of marriage.<sup>60</sup> He felt that dowry also results in humiliation of women by reducing them from their noble status of 'ardhangini' (better half) of men.<sup>61</sup> He believed that it had far reaching psychological impact on young girls.<sup>62</sup>

To curb the venomous dowry system, he wanted parents to educate their daughters so that they refuse to marry young men who wanted a price for marrying and would rather remain spinsters than to be party to the degrading terms. He suggested that a strong public opinion needs to be formulated against it and such young men who soil their fingers with such ill-gotten gold should be excommunicated from society. He appealed to the educated men and women to take active steps to do away with this evil. He also advocated change in education and also stressed the need for taking recourse to radical measure like organizing youth movements and offering 'satyagraha' against those perpetrating the system.<sup>63</sup>

He said that its immediate impact was nightmare for the parents who had a marriageable daughter, and in the long run it was also the source of discrimination in the Indian society against the birth of daughters. Furthermore, not being able to arrange money, the parents were forced to give their daughters in marriage to absolutely unsuitable matches. He condemned the system and said that it was nothing but sale of girls.<sup>64</sup>

### **Sati**

The most notorious of the custom concerning women was 'sati' (the self-immolation by widow on the funeral pyres of their husband). Gandhi found the roots of the sati system in the blind egoism of men. He argued that if wife must prove her loyalty and undivided devotion to her husband, then the husband must also prove his allegiance and devotion to his wife.<sup>65</sup> Since he believed that true marriage means not merely the union of the bodies but the union of

the soul and the bereaved wife should be satisfied with a portrait or a waxen image of her husband.<sup>66</sup>

He felt that woman should prove her satihood not by mounting the funeral pyre at her husband's death, but she should prove it with every breath that she breathes from the moment that she plighted her troth to him at the 'satapadi' (seven steps) ceremony by her renunciation, sacrifice, self-abnegation and dedication to the service of her husband, his family and the country. She should shun comforts and delights of the senses.<sup>67</sup> She should refuse to be enslaved by the narrow domestic chores and interest of the family, but utilize every opportunity to add to her stock of knowledge and increase her capacity for service by cultivating renunciation and self-discipline by completely identifying herself with her husband and the whole world.

He regarded sati as a futile exercise as, instead of restoring the dead husband to life, it takes away one more life. He believed that satihood is the acme of purity. This purity cannot be attained or realized by dying. It can be attained only through constant striving, constant immolation of the spirit from day to day.<sup>68</sup>

### **Women and Jewellery**

Gandhi wanted to free women from the allurements of jewellery, which he regarded a source of subordination, subjection and intimidation.<sup>69</sup> He asked women to stop considering themselves the object of man's lust and refuse to adorn for men including her husband.<sup>70</sup> He believed that ornaments make women a convenient prey to men. He asked women to see the conspiracy of men behind the jewellery and to rebel against it.<sup>71</sup>

He also looked at the ornaments as objects which harbour dirt. He thought that a woman who is loaded with ancient ornaments on her hands, feet, ears, nose and hair couldn't keep either these jewels or the related part of her body clean.

Gandhi urged women to refuse to be the slaves of their own whims and fancies and the slaves of men. He asked them to refuse to decorate themselves and not to go in for scents and lavender water. He was of the view that man is born of woman; he is flesh of her flesh and bone of her bone. He asked women to come to their own and deliver their message again.<sup>72</sup>

Gandhi wanted educated women to take lead and create public opinion against the allurements of jewellery, so that women could be saved from their subordination to men and wives could be saved from beating by their husbands.<sup>73</sup>

### **Molestation**

Regarding molestation by boys, Gandhi was of the view that the girls must learn the art of protecting themselves against the indecent behaviour of un-chivalrous youth. For immediate personal relief he accepted flinging books etc., at the molester and added that other methods of using physical force can also be used to deal with such situations. He warned the Indian girls against copying the modern girls and complicating a problem that has become a serious menace. He was of the view that if girls do not protect or help themselves, God will not help them. God helps only those who help themselves. When a woman is assaulted, she may not stop to think in terms of ahimsa. Her primary duty is self-protection. She is at liberty to employ every method or means that comes to her mind in order to defend her honour. God has given her nails and teeth. She must use them with all her strength and if need be die in the effort.

### **Prostitution**

Gandhi regarded prostitution as a social disease i.e., a moral leprosy, promoted by men who lack morality. It degraded men no less than it did women. He felt it to be a matter of bitter shame and sorrow and of deep humiliation that a number of women have to sell their chastity for men's lust.<sup>74</sup> He was unequivocal in denouncing prostitution, notwithstanding whether it is indulged in directly or operates clandestinely under the guise of dancing or cabaret girls. Pointing to the way of life and living of the prostitutes, he stated that these women did not choose their fallen life; it is men who drove them to it. For the gratification of their bodily desires, men have committed a great atrocity on women.<sup>75</sup>

Gandhi thought that though men were primarily responsible for driving women into flesh trade, women were also responsible for allowing themselves to be driven to this sin. He advised them to give up this bad and degrading profession and to take up honourable living by spinning Khadi.<sup>76</sup> He urged the men folk to give a helping hand to 'these fallen sisters' so that they are able to live the life of dignity once again. He asked men, who were responsible for driving women into prostitution, to sincerely strive to rehabilitate them by providing them suitable opportunities of education and employment, so that they could become socially acceptable and economically independent. He felt that victims could get involved in the pursuit of noble causes like constructive satyagraha for swaraj in the form of spinning and weaving. He believed that once they become socially acceptable and economically independent, it would not matter much

if they are unable to remarry for they could always remain aloof from family affairs and live like 'sanyasini' and play their role in serving not only themselves but the whole nation.

### **Women and Untouchability**

Gandhi believed that women can also play an important role in removing the evil of untouchability by befriending the Harijans, by going to their quarters, by hugging their children as their own, by engaging themselves in their welfare and by finding out whether they get enough to eat, whether they get pure water to drink, whether they have fresh light and air etc. He also asked the women folk to treat the children of Harijans as their own.<sup>77</sup>

### **Women and the Nation**

Gandhi was of the opinion that India can defend herself and make progress not through the atom bomb but through non-violence alone and that women alone can take the lead in this for God had endowed them with great power. He believed that the salvation of any society and of any nation lies in the hand of the mothers. Unless women are loved and respected, unless they are healthy and happy and unless the homes and families are illuminated by an enlightened, free womanhood, there will never be peace, happiness and prosperity in the country. He felt that if half of the population of India would remain paralysed, the dream of India's independence would remain unattainable. He maintained that women of India had strength, ability, character and determination to stand on their own and work shoulder to shoulder with men in every walk of life. He had full faith in their sincerity and ability. He called upon women to join the freedom struggle. Women came in great numbers at Gandhi's call and acted upon his advice by participating in the social and political movements. Women from all over India and from all walks of life showed their ability by taking out processions, holding demonstrations, collecting funds, developing cottage industries, working for removal of untouchability, propagating swadeshi, picketing liquor shops, conducting underground activities, courting arrest and even sacrificing their lives.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, it can be said that Mahatma Gandhi did not want women to neglect their families or leave their traditional roles as nurturers. In this sense the critics can argue that he supported traditional gender roles. However he did not want women to suffer and be limited to home only. He worked for removal of all the evil

practices like sati, child marriage, permanent widowhood, 'purdah', illiteracy, dowry etc., and to give women a status that is equal to men in society. Moreover he wanted women to play a positive role in national life and here he helped women break the traditional concept of women as condemned to the private sphere alone. He empowered women to become activists, to think and act beyond their traditional gender roles. Thus, he successfully ushered and enabled Indian women to travel the road from purdah to activism.

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# Making of an 'Entrepreneurial Self': Politics of Demand-driven Approach to Drinking Water Supply in India

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## ABSTRACT

*The history water governance in India is characterized by strong governmental control. Since independence the Government of India has given high priority to water governance by initiating many programmes propped up with modern science and technology. However, water governance has undergone a paradigm shift, especially after the 1990s. The centralized form of drinking water supply through big technologies and bureaucratic control is replaced by a decentralized approach with pluralistic means that emphasizes 'citizen participation' as the key element. The 73rd and 74th amendments provided further impetus to this shift. The present paper examines the politics that valorizes citizen's demand and participation in drinking water supply. It argues that, instead of stepping back from the welfare provisions like drinking water, the state works through individual freedom by highlighting the role of the citizen in development initiatives. Further, the paper argues that emphasis on 'demand-driven supply' approach, which is based on the notion of 'entrepreneurial citizen', is not addressing the question of social justice or equal access in the use of natural resources like water.*

## Introduction

IN INDIA, GOVERNANCE of the water resources was always given high priority with policies and practices to bridge 'unequal access' to safe drinking water. The pattern of delivery of basic needs in the country has been influenced by the worldwide discourses on the concept of development and shaped by the neo-liberal path adopted

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in the 1990s. In the case of drinking water also, the hitherto adopted approach of the Government of India has changed. The centralized form of drinking water supply through big technologies and bureaucratic control is replaced by a decentralized approach with pluralistic means that emphasizes 'citizen participation' as the key element of the discourse.

The present paper tries to unearth the politics that valorizes citizen's demand and participation in drinking water supply. Instead of stepping back from the welfare provisions like drinking water, the state works through individual freedom by highlighting the role of the citizen in development initiatives. The paper argues that the emphasis on 'demand-driven supply' approach, which is based on citizen participation or the notion of 'entrepreneurial citizen', is also not addressing the questions of social justice and unequal access that historically prevails in the use of natural resources like water.

### **Water Rights in India**

In India, historically, the concept of 'clean/safe drinking water' is mainly associated with social and cultural factors. In Hindu mythology it is recognised as a spiritual symbol<sup>1</sup> and a purifier. It is 'considered to have an intrinsic purity' and is also the 'most common medium of purification'<sup>2</sup>. In a highly caste/class ridden society like India, access to drinking water is always associated with the concept of 'purity'. Caste-based social hierarchy is determined locally through notions of purity and pollution and was decisive in access to and control over water<sup>3</sup>. The *dalits* are still prevented from drawing water from the wells and ponds owned by the upper castes. But the social stigma related with the caste-based purity/impurity of water is a complex one. It may not be always necessarily related with the caste status, but it can be linked to the dominance and subordination within the Indian cultural semantics<sup>4</sup>. Within the lower castes also there exists stigma in accepting drinking water based on the caste hierarchies<sup>5</sup>.

The unequal access to water, hence, not mentioning the geographical and climatic changes in the different parts of the country, is a socially constructed one. Historically, ground water has been considered as a private property in India. Informal water rights—both for individuals and groups—have existed in India since ancient times<sup>6</sup> and continue even today, albeit in a much weaker form, in many tank irrigation systems of South India<sup>7</sup>. The right of access to safe drinking water was intertwined with the murky social relationship that exists within the society.

In India water reservoirs, tanks, ponds, lakes, rivers, streams,

*nalas*, ground water basins etc., come under the common pool natural resources<sup>8</sup>. The right to access these resources is generally a matter of convention<sup>9</sup>. It is used to be considered as a collective good. There are also evidences of community-managed irrigation systems which enjoyed the rights over water and other natural resources<sup>10</sup>. These groups have been often counter-productive and reflect the power relations inherent in the historically evolved hierarchical structures of the Indian village.

In modern times, individual rights to both surface water and groundwater are recognized only indirectly through land rights<sup>11</sup>. According to the 'dominant heritage' principle implied in the Transfer of Property Act IV of 1882 and the Land Acquisition Act of 1894, the person, who owns the land, owns the water below the land as well<sup>12</sup>. By consensus, he obtains virtually unlimited right to pump out this water. In the Constitution, water is a matter included in entry 17 of the State List. This entry is subject to the provision of entry 56 of Union List<sup>13</sup>. As per entry 17 in the State List under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, it is the states that have jurisdiction over water resources within their borders<sup>14</sup>. But the powers of the states are subject to entry 56 in the Union List that allows the central government power to regulate and develop inter-state rivers and river valleys when this is declared by parliament as a matter of public interest<sup>15</sup>. The central government also has regulatory roles in the water sector as per Article 252 related to inter-state water projects as well as under the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, which requires the states to be compliant to the central guidelines. More importantly, the central government also has an important role in resolving inter-state water disputes as per the provisions under Article 262.

The Model Groundwater (Control and Regulation) Bill of 1992, which was formulated and circulated by the centre for the consideration of the states, postulates a kind of groundwater permit system. But it fails to set the withdrawal limits<sup>16</sup>. Apart from these rules, the legal system in India has not formally specified any water rights system. We have evidences for the operation of rudimentary water rights systems that are capable of being developed into an effective water rights system<sup>17</sup>. Some of the South Indian irrigation systems have informal and prioritized water rights not for individuals, but for different distributaries or command segments<sup>18</sup>.

The land-right based system creates unevenness in access to drinking water especially in the rural areas. The access is decided by caste/class concern and is still common in rural India. Prevention of *dalits* from using certain water facilities in the villages like wells, ponds and so on is very common in the rural areas. In this case, the

"owners" are the so called "higher" castes.<sup>19</sup> This unevenness in the ownership over water is not properly addressed even by the state. In public finance literature, the budgetary allocations needed for the provision of drinking water and sanitation in rural India are earmarked mainly for the poor. Naturally, the allocations, governed by non-market principles, are not on the basis of investment criteria such as social rates of return/cost-benefit ratio. But the sharp class/caste division that exists in the rural areas results in persons from the higher caste and class usurping the benefits. Within the theoretical arguments of exploitation of common pool resources, the image of the powerless is often reproduced as a 'free rider'<sup>20</sup> and excluded by the owners of these rights.

### **Water Governance since Independence**

The subject of water in British India can be placed within the broader dynamics of colonial rule<sup>21</sup>. The colonial policies which were based on control and commercialization/profit caused substantial degradation of the traditional water harvesting technologies in India<sup>22</sup>. It was supported by the advancement of science that helped the domination of a scientific administration to shape the forms of control<sup>23</sup>. On the contrary, the environmental policy and law in independent India has not evolved in anticipation of a problem, but rather has emerged as a knee jerk reaction to existing problems. Priority was given for radical changes in the hitherto existing governance of the British administration. A significant section of the scientific community supported the western science and technology although they articulated "an alternative development philosophy that echoed the nationalist aspiration to self reliance including technological sovereignty"<sup>24</sup>. The greatest task of the government was to streamline the governance of a large (majority of them poor) population. The centralized control of the natural resources, especially water, was assigned high priority in this process. It was materialized by objectively identifying the ecological problem through scientific personnel with positivistic technical knowledge as well as design-efficient solutions for the most pressing ones. A significant change in approach, not only in water governance but also the general trend of the government, was the domination of the positivist approach which submerges or marginalizes local wisdom as unscientific.

It is also worth noting that the drinking water policies of independent India were evolved based on the discourses on safety within a discourse of public health. The various policies and regulatory mechanisms that emerged were also a continuation of the colonial legacy based on the principles of control. Even though the

development paradigm was based on an amorphous form of "socialism" upheld by the intellectuals in political leadership<sup>25</sup>, it was dominated by the overemphasis given to centralized bureaucratic and technocratic control. The western concept of development dominant in India's policies was materialised through all-embracing "Five Year Plans". But the overemphasis on science and technology for harnessing the natural resources and ensuring social justice ended with neither West nor East but a resultant interaction between them<sup>26</sup>. It was based on controlling the human behavior to prevent waterborne diseases, for example, cholera, rather than an understanding of the underlying social inequalities<sup>27</sup>.

The first attempt towards this line can be traced back to the appointment of Joseph Bhore in 1946 and the recommendation of the environmental committee 1949. The Committee gave priority to water supply and sanitation. The efforts of the state to provide safe water was a co-mingling of the discourse on waterborne diseases and technological/technocratic solutions for it. Resituating the local expertise within the formal expertise institutions<sup>28</sup> through the production of knowledge on illness and death related with safe water, census operations, creation of large dams, establishment of ground water boards, pollution control etc., were also significant in this context. The notion of safety has also found undertones of states' control over the natural resources, which is evident in the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Cess Act, 1977 and the Environment (Protection) Act (1986) .

While the above regulations directly deal with water quality, there still exists huge inequality regarding access and quantity of water. In view of the absence of any significant reform initiatives, the legal aspects governing groundwater resources continue to remain largely divorced from both resource realities and economic requirements<sup>29</sup>. The control over groundwater at the field level is governed by a *de facto* system of rights as determined by farm size, the depth and number of wells, technological factors like pumping capacity, and economic power<sup>30</sup>.

The Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) in 1972-73 and the Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) during the Fifth Five Year Plan (From 1974-75) was also not efficient in curbing the inequality in access to safe drinking water between the rich and the poor. In response to the international agenda, the Government of India also launched the "International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (81- 90) Programme" in 1981 with a view to achieving:



- (i) 100% coverage of rural and urban population with safe drinking water supply facilities;
- (ii) 80% coverage of urban population with sanitation;
- (iii) 25% coverage of rural population with sanitation by 1990.

To supplement the effort of the State Government in providing drinking water, Technology Mission for Drinking Water was constituted in 1986 by Government of India, which was renamed as Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Supply Mission in 1991. This was also dominated by the discourse on 'sustainability' and 'safety' based on scientific rationality. It proposes scientific source finding of water, control of fluorosis, eradication of Guinea Worm, removal of excess iron and control of brackishness. The Sixth Five Year Plan included the need for improved environmental quality in safe drinking water supply<sup>31</sup>. The Centrally Sponsored Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP) launched as part of the Seventh Plan in 1986 also stressed the importance of the application of science and technology in drinking water sector<sup>32</sup>. Restructured as Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC) in 2002, it was a breakthrough in the concept of sanitation, which has now been expanded to include personal hygiene, home sanitation, safe water, garbage disposal, excreta disposal and waste water disposal<sup>33</sup>.

A noted characteristic of all these target-based missions and programmes is its strong commitment to science and technology and the international discourses on drinking water emerging from time to time. It never addressed the social realities of the Indian situation. On reviewing the implementation of the rural water supply programme of the period 1992-1997 in Report No.3 of 1998 (Civil), the CAG observed deficiencies in planning, unscientific identification of water sources, re-emergence of problem villages/habitations, non-functional water treatment plants, expenditure on non-priority areas, incorrect reporting of financial achievements, diversion/misuse of funds, ineffective control, monitoring and review, and excessive purchases of materials.<sup>34</sup> These techno-scientific interventions are, and always have been, evolving in response to shifting political agendas, developing scientific/technological solutions, a strong commitment to the western notions of development "known for misplanning and negligence"<sup>35</sup>.

### Decentralization in the Water Sector

The concept of decentralized management of natural resources can be traced back to Mahatma Gandhi's concept of *Gram Swaraj* or village-centric development. It was given further push with the

formation of a committee in 1957 to study its feasibility under the chairmanship of Balwantrai Mehta. The discourse underwent several changes under the Ashok Mehta Committee (1977), C.H Hanumantha Rao Committee (1983) and L.M Singvi committee (1985)<sup>36</sup> culminating in the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India.

The concept of decentralization got prominence in India on the plank that centralized planning alienates people from the process of development<sup>37</sup>. The most severe criticism against centralization is that it constrains the rights of people<sup>38</sup>. Panchayati Raj is a three tier system with Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block or intermediate level, and Zilla Parishad at the district level. Gram Sabha<sup>39</sup> is the pivotal element in the Panchayati Raj system and decisions related with local development are taken through it. The central idea is to ensure the participation of citizens in the entire process of development.

The move towards the decentralization of water sector began with Command Area Development (CAD) in 1974 aimed at hastening the utilization of the created irrigation potential through farmers' cooperation in outlet level water allocation, fee collection, and system maintenance<sup>40</sup>. The concept was reinforced by the National Water Policy (NWP) of 1987 which called for raising the canal water rates and promoting user participation in canal management<sup>41</sup>. The process of decentralization in the water and sanitation provisions has not been a singular effort. Rather it is a discursive formation constituted by multiple knowledges, agents and actors. It has been an outcome of factors such as declining irrigation investment, poor financial performance of water projects, and the privatization of public sector enterprises initiated since the New Economic Policy of 1991. The new strategy forms out of the convergence of many internationally acclaimed concepts like sustainability, participation, appropriate technologies, efficiency, cost sharing etc. For example, the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission talked about "institutionalising community based demand- driven rural water supply programme with cost sharing instruments by communities, gradually replacing the current supply-driven, centrally maintained non-people participating rural water supply programme"<sup>42</sup>.

What is prominent in these policies is the shift in approach from water once being considered an abundant resource to one that is increasingly seen as a 'scarce' resource, which needs to be managed judiciously. Water scarcity, as it is constructed in global declarations and debates, is often presented in absolute and monolithic terms, obscuring the complex nature of scarcity and its linkages with ecological, socio-political, temporal and anthropogenic dimensions<sup>43</sup>.

Keeping in view the increasing demand for water, the National Water Policy states that, "water is a prime natural resource, a basic need and a precious national asset"<sup>44</sup>. "Planning, development and management of water resources need to be governed by national perspectives"<sup>45</sup>.

The contextualisation of water within the debate of scarcity has many dimensions. It includes technological solutions and alternative diffusion strategies. Some of the limitations of technological and technocratic intervention have already been discussed in this paper. The debate on scarcity of water in India is often attributed to its large population and failure of the governmental mechanisms to reach at the grassroots. It is supported by the governmental data through National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), Census and the data on accessibility, depletion, pollution etc. The other side of the picture is the debate on the maximum possible extent of utilization of water resources. These two arguments i.e., "scarcity" and "optimum utilization", which seem to stand in binary positions, finds a common platform in the argument that water supply should be 'demand-driven'. It implies that, supply-based paradigm of water resource development in India, since independence, has caused wastage of water by the over utilization of the community especially in the rural areas.

In this context of failed or inefficient intervention of government and the huge external debt and the new liberalization policies, the approach of people's participation got wider popularity. It is assumed that the citizens have a role in meeting their basic needs and sufficient measures have to be taken to increase their capacity for that. It was also emphasized in the National Water Policy and Total Sanitation Campaign programme. According to the National Water Policy 2002:

Water Users' Associations and the local bodies such as municipalities and *gram panchayats* should particularly be involved in the operation, maintenance and management of water infrastructures / facilities at appropriate levels progressively, with a view to eventually transfer the management of such facilities to the user groups / local bodies.

The state's role has changed from provider of service to its citizens to a facilitator and people's participation is extolled as the most appropriate way to achieve efficient water availability and sanitation.

### **National Water Policy**

The existing water policy of India emerged from the context that the equitable distribution of basic needs required astute use of both the

natural science-led approach which tells us about the physical and chemical processes and the social or political approach involved in harnessing or developing water resources for human use<sup>46</sup>. The first National Water Policy was adopted in September 1987 and the National Water Resources Council adopted a revised policy in April 2002.

Water policy relates to the declared statements as well as the intended approaches of the central and state governments for water-resource planning, development, allocation, and management. It includes statements not only on the overall policy framework but also on specific policy issues such as project selection, water pricing and cost recovery, and user and private participation. Notably, since both the general and specific policies within the water sector are also influenced often by other sectoral policies related to agriculture, public finance, and basic needs, the former cannot be dealt with in isolation of the latter.

Water policies of India are marked with their explicit recognition of the role of private sector participation and the need for a paradigm shift from water development to performance improvement<sup>47</sup>. It reinforces the long history of partnership with the external agencies such as World Bank, DFID, SIDA, SDC, and Dutch Aid. The National Water Policy document 1987 stated: "In keeping with the objectives of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade Programme (1981-1991), adequate drinking water facilities have to be provided to the entire population in both urban and rural areas and sanitation facilities to 80 % of the urban population and 25% of the rural population by the end of the decade"<sup>48</sup>. It reveals the strong commitment of the government's policies to the international discourses and agencies related with the governance of water. As explicit in the international policies on development, 'efficiency and sustainability' are the major two aspects that have been adopted by the external agencies as a viable solution to drinking water scarcity. It is also reflected in both the national water policies of 1987 and 2007. It states that "....efforts to develop, conserve, utilise and manage this important resource in a sustainable manner, have to be guided by the national perspective". But the issue of efficiency and sustainability has been manifested through the proxy of "community participation" or "user participation".

The national policies on water and sanitation are in tune with the agenda of the external agencies especially with respect to community participation in every stage of the project. For example, the water policy of 1987 mentioned the need for the involvement of farmers and voluntary organizations in efficient use and water management.

These policies accept the global consensus that “management at the lowest appropriate level” is an important prerequisite for sustainability. In line with this argument the National Water Policy 2002 clearly states:

Management of the water resources for diverse uses should incorporate a participatory approach; by involving not only the various governmental agencies but also the users and other stakeholders, in an effective and decisive manner, in various aspects of planning, design, development and management of the water resources schemes. Necessary legal and institutional changes should be made at various levels for the purpose, duly ensuring appropriate role for women. Water Users’ Associations and the local bodies such as municipalities and *gram panchayats* should particularly be involved in the operation, maintenance and management of water infrastructures / facilities at appropriate levels progressively, with a view to eventually transfer the management of such facilities to the user groups / local bodies<sup>49</sup>.

It also encourages private sector participation for the efficient and accountable service delivery with corporate management principles. The strategy has changed from the top-down, fully government implemented approach to a community participation approach through a “demand responsive approach in partnership with NGOs and user groups” and finally to “community-driven development”. The next section analyses the implications of this approach in the pricing of water.

### Water Pricing

The issue of water pricing in public water supply and sanitation system emerged in the context of high capital costs of creating capacities, high operation and maintenance (O&M) costs and poor cost recovery<sup>50</sup>. According to UNDP and World Bank, cost recovery rates for 15 states in India in 1993-94 were estimated at 5.16 percent for water supply and sanitation<sup>51</sup>. The combined revenue and fiscal deficit of central and state governments estimated by the World Bank (2003) as percent of GDP stood at 6.9 and 10.1 respectively and shows that as the public debt-GDP ratio is now more than one, deficits of these orders are unsustainable<sup>52</sup>.

The existing urban models of delivery in India are (a) State government owned water boards delivering water to cities (e.g. Hyderabad, Delhi), (b) State government owned water boards providing capital works to be managed and operated by cities (e.g. Karnataka, Kerala) and (c) city water departments responsible for the delivery of W&S Services (Mumbai, Kolkata)<sup>53</sup>. But in the rural

areas it is still either in the private sector (both private wells and other means of private water supply) or a small portion is covered by public tap system or public wells.

In both urban and rural cases the pricing of water is done through direct collection or in the form of land or other taxes, through direct collection by Panchayat in the case of some states or by the state. Apart from that, the issue of pricing of water and sanitation in India leads to some fundamental questions of states responsibility and social justice. It is often argued that community participation coupled with appropriate technology is a viable solution to meet the needs of the rural poor. Privatization is also, to an extent and at some levels of population, an answer to the scarcity of clean drinking water.

Now the question is who should pay for what type of services. It is argued that because the benefits from water supply such as time savings and health benefits accrue to the household, the public finance principle dictates that bulk of the costs should be borne by the households themselves. By the same principle, because there are strong positive externalities in sanitation whereby the benefits accrue to the community as a whole from safe excreta disposal, the costs outside the household should be borne by successive levels from block to district, state and national<sup>54</sup>.

In the case of water and sanitation the distinctions between public and private goods is not easy. Waterborne diseases in India are health hazards. The positive externalities mean that the nation as a whole will benefit from improved access to safe water and sanitation through productivity gains and reduction of the cost of health care. The public-private criterion for the allocation of resources often obviates the state's responsibility to ensure that basic levels of services are provided to its citizens.

Through a number of studies it has been contended that people are willing to pay for water supply. Willingness to pay became a major justification for instituting charges for water supply in rural and urban areas<sup>55</sup>. The 54th round of NSSO shows that three-fourth of the rural households are willing to contribute money and/or labour towards improvement of sanitation in their neighborhood and they are less interested (only two-third of the households) if the improvement takes place at the village level<sup>56</sup>.

Pay and use public toilets in towns and cities are generally welcomed in India. There are instances of people paying around Rs. 20 a month for using rural sanitary complexes set up by village panchayats<sup>57</sup>. Since the principle of payment for urban services has been generally accepted, although recovery was low, the chief focus was on payment for rural water supply, and in particular by the poor.

The inability of the state to meet the basic levels of services in rural areas due to political, financial and institutional constraints, and the high degree of inefficiency that has prevailed in the sector, has led to a "growing recognition" that the private sector and public-private participation can play a major role in achieving the fundamental right of all to safe water and environmental sanitation<sup>58</sup>.

Privatisation in the form of tanker water supply, bottled water etc., already exists, but the latest water policy allows the corporate private sector to build and operate dams across rivers for hydro-electric power or irrigation. The Doha Declaration of WTO through GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) has pressed for the inclusion of water in national commitments so that India will be forced to provide national treatment and market access rules to benefit Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) without regard for social or environmental impacts<sup>59</sup>. But in India privatization is not an easy task considering the presence of wide network of civil society groups focusing on water and the protest of the affected people. For example, with the privatization of Sheonath River in Chattisgarh by Radius Water Limited, the debate on privatization of water has become for the first time the focus of the media and civil society in India<sup>60</sup>. Buckled under pressure of nationwide protest by the civil society groups and the people the agreement was cancelled in 2003<sup>61</sup>. The private supply of piped water is also running in some states like Karnataka and Rajasthan, but it is criticized for its quality of water supplied and the monopoly of the sector<sup>62</sup>. Overexploitation of ground water for profit is also a danger with privatization.

In this context "community participation" has been extolled as a 'viable' alternative financing strategy for the water and sanitation sector. Community participation is ensured through the facilitation of NGOs or other civil society organizations. Appropriate water and sanitation technologies are used based on the decision of the community. Microfinance, small loans for the purpose of income-generating activities and support for other business services along with savings mechanisms also play a crucial role in the community participation model.

### **Analysis of Policies and Programmes**

India's water policies and programmes are based on the following principles to allocate sector reform funds to States: 1) a drive for economic efficiency and II) need for alternative methods of welfare financing and provision<sup>63</sup>. India has adopted a pluralistic strategy for the water and sanitation provisions that involves a multitude of actors including the external funding agencies like World Bank, UNDP,

Asian Development Bank, Japan Drinking Water Supply Project, the civil society groups like NGOs, the experts from the government agencies and the local people. Under pressure from the external funding agencies, the concept of basic services is reframed as commodities subjected to the rigors of the market. Water as 'basic need' came to be shaped by cost recovery mechanisms entrenched in new discourses on 'effective utilization' and 'sustainability'<sup>64</sup>. Under the new flexible approach, which is aimed at curbing the national debt through structural adjustment policies, communities and local institutions have considerable degree of flexibility in choosing the appropriate institutional model for service delivery suited to their own specific local context. By introducing this programme, it is envisaged to challenge the traditional top-down model of delivery of water supply services by State Government-owned Engineering Departments and Agencies.

The entire approach has been shifted from a supply-driven approach to a demand-responsive approach. What is often undermined in the official documents and literature is the politics of renewed importance of civil society and people's participation and the new role of state in delivering the services to its citizens. The New Delhi Declaration (UNDP 1990) envisaged the transformation of the role of the government from that of a provider to that of a promoter and facilitator. The development approach has been dominated by efficiency arguments, particularly economic efficiency. The new discourse on public health is argued to be related to individualism, consumerism and victim-blaming and, even more fundamentally, a "new politics of citizenship, with a greater emphasis on duties implied by rights"<sup>65</sup>. In the water and sanitation sector the hitherto followed centralized approach is projected as an inefficient system of service delivery. It is a fact that the centralized approaches to the delivery of basic needs were constrained by the prominence of scientific management and bureaucratic apathy. The centralized management with technocratic expertise is often expected to bridge the gap in diffusion of water and sanitation technologies, but such expectations embody an array of unexamined assumptions about the nature of the "problem" and may be disconnected from local needs and priorities.

The degradation of values in politics failed to show any political will in taking bold and effective reformative steps within the governmental institutions to solve the problems in this sector. The private arrangement for the drinking water is available only to a small section of the population. The centralized piped drinking water supply is available mainly to the urban inhabitants. The brunt of water



scarcity mainly affects the poor, especially in the rural areas with poor purchasing power.

The international discourses which states water as a "human rights" issue also undermine the role of the state in providing drinking water to its citizens. Instead of finding out viable alternatives under the control of governments these discourses try to withdraw governmental control on the management of drinking water supply and reinforced the role of civil society in meeting the drinking water needs. The process creates a new form of responsabilisation imposed on the citizens. To put it differently, a citizen is responsible for his own destiny, in this context securing the availability of drinking water.

All programmes are now centered around crass 'economism',<sup>66</sup> which is buttressed by the neo-liberal policies. Even though concern for the socially and economically backward sections is reflected in the national and international discourses, a subtle analysis of the mechanisms and values imbibed with these projects reveals another side of the story. The Indian Government's decentralization policy, Panchayati raj Act of 1993, also promulgates the importance of involvement of the marginalized sections especially SC/STs and women.

These discourse and policies celebrate people's participation as an effective mode of governance. It is true that the participation of the people in determining their needs and kind of development in their localities is a revolutionary step in the context of diverse social situations in India. However, the issue lies in the redefinition and treating of the resources like water as an economic good. Recognizing some of the lessons learned in the sector, the Dublin International Conference on Water and the Environment (1992) suggested that water should be treated as an 'economic good'. While no clear interpretation of this term has been provided, it is generally interpreted that water should have a 'price'.

The pricing of water and sanitation services is glossed with the term 'community participation'. It involves a pluralistic strategy with multilevel planning and implementation moulded by the international funding agencies like World Bank. This socio-economic and technological pluralism is a consensus model in delivering the services to the poor and the pricing is imposed with minimal resistance of the civil society.

Participatory rural development techniques have proved to be efficient means of social technology in legitimizing the commodification of natural resources. These models draw their lineages from the much celebrated Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques promoted by Robert Chambers. These techniques are

based on the empowerment of the community to meet its own needs. It consists of both social, economic and technological empowerment. Social empowerment includes various techniques to make the people aware of the need for collective action in addressing their problems. Local level responsabilisation based on rational choice theory is normally done through NGOs. These community participation models based on rational choice approach encourage the individual to increase his economic efficiency through various techniques. Technological empowerment includes the introduction of appropriate technologies for drinking water and sanitation. The technologies are opted and managed by the community.

In the community-based and private diffusion of water and sanitation services the question of distribution in a non-discriminatory manner is a matter of prime concern. The image of an Indian village assumes great importance in this context. It is very complex and variegated with castes, sub castes and other socio-cultural formations. The concept of cost recovery can operate only in a relatively cohesive group dynamics. What ensues is the exclusion of weaker sections from getting the benefits given their caste and economic disabilities to take part in the projects. Within this context the image of a village which is created with the production of knowledge on 'rurality' is quite relevant. The term 'rural' is often represented with negative characteristics and to be intervened from outside for making change<sup>67</sup> and the rural people are considered to be empowered to make their own choice for their basic needs.

Demand-driven approach, whether through community participation model or privatization model, involves a behavioral change of the rural folk from mere being receivers of the benefits to active participants. Since the concept of 'active participation' entails monetary and physical participation of an individual or community, it is clearly linked up with the historically attributed position of an individual in a social network. So the current water policy of India which encouraged a 'demand-driven' approach that is based on business principles such as cost recovery, efficiency and demand has deep-rooted implication on the concept of equality and social justice in the use of natural resources like water.

## **Conclusion**

The issue of water in India is a complex subject with various socio-economic, political and cultural dimensions. Even in the modern era, its use and distribution has been determined by caste and class considerations, especially in the rural areas. If the notion 'purity' was wielded against certain communities and individuals in the

ancient as well as modern period, governance of water since India's independence period has become a means of exercising state control. It is exercised through constitutional provisions, various acts, policies and programmes. The analysis of national policies and programmes on drinking water since independence exposes the pitfalls in giving overemphasis on science and technology and the dangers of a centralised approach. The failure of the centralized control lead to debates on peoples involvement in the drinking water supply. It emerged against the backdrop of a neo-liberal regime since the 1990s and is strengthened by the introduction of Panchayati Raj with the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendments. The strategy is to widen the states mechanisms to include the civil society and local people in the process of drinking water supply. One of the main components of these discourses is that a 'demand-driven approach' to drinking water supply in India. For legitimizing this approach these discourses placed water as an 'economic good' that implies searching for 'efficient and 'sustainable' methods for distribution and cost recovery. The state is strategically focusing on empowering the individual to meet his own demands and neglects the power relations at the local level that undermines the concepts of equity and social justice in distributing the basic services to its citizens. In short the paper tries to expose the politics behind the increased importance given to individualization and responsabilisation of the citizens in meeting their water requirements.

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# Reflections on Countering Structural Violence against Women Through Non-Violence

*Ellina Samantroy*

## ABSTRACT

*The present paper tries to explore the various dimensions of gender violence especially structural in the Indian context. While direct violence is horrific and its brutality receives greater attention, structural violence is almost always invisible, embedded in ubiquitous social structures, normalized by stable institutions and day to day practices. It is challenging to untangle these structural roots of violence and develop a sociological imagination for perceiving violence in both structures as well as in individual behavior. In this context the paper makes an attempt to analyse the social location of structural violence and women's role in adopting a Gandhian, non-violent approach to combat violence. In the paper an effort is made to analyze the role of women as peace builders in combating violence through nonviolent means.*

## Introduction

THERE IS NO DENYING THE FACT that women constitute almost half of India's population, but they are treated most unjustly and unfairly in all walks of life. According to the latest United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, India's position in the world on the parameter of gender-related development index (GDI), which was 128 in 1998, has improved to 108 out of 143 countries ranked in 2000. Though the position has improved significantly it is still low in the overall rank. Education, industrial revolution and technological breakthrough have brought about a gradual awakening among women. However, there is ample evidence to suggest that women have been subordinated, subjugated and exploited since the beginning

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of the civilization and are still facing the trauma. Violence against women continues to be a global epidemic that kills, tortures, and maims physically, psychologically, sexually and economically. Violence against women is not only endemic, but also pervasive and occurs throughout the whole life span of women.

The most pervasive form of human rights violation is denying women equality, security, dignity, self-worth, and their right to enjoy fundamental freedoms. Violence against women is present in every country, cutting across boundaries of culture, class, education, income, ethnicity and age. Even though most societies proscribe violence against women, the reality is that violations against women's human rights are often sanctioned under the garb of cultural practices and norms, or through misinterpretation of religious tenets.

Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states that "violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life". Violence, *inter alia*, is gendered, embodied and institutionalized. Johan Galtung has rightly remarked "when one husband beats his wife, there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million wives in ignorance, there is structural violence"<sup>1</sup>.

### Conceptualizing Structural Violence

C.Wright Mill's classical notion of 'sociological imagination' stresses the importance of looking beyond people at the individual level to the structural backdrop of personal lives. He argues that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period that he can know his own changes in life as well as those of all individuals in his circumstances<sup>2</sup>. His contemporary, Peter Berger, also appreciates the importance of social location in understanding individual actions. According to Berger, to be located in society means to be at the intersection point of specific social forces. Locations become important because it influences a whole gamut of conditions ranging from life-chances and health to world-view<sup>3</sup>. However the phenomenological perspective in sociology ascribes significant importance to phenomena and the meaning individuals attach to these phenomena. Similarly Max Weber considers interpretative understanding to be important. In this context, it can be said that it becomes imperative to understand and interpret the meaning of structural violence in order to overcome its invisibility. Psychiatrist Gilligan's work, *Violence: Reflections on a*

*National Epidemic*, provides an excellent antidote to the problematic tendencies to categorize, pathologize and focus exclusively on the individual level. Gilligan identifies the multi-faceted components of violence (biological, psychological and social) and recognizes that the dominant bio-psychological approach ignores the structural and macro-level dimensions. Any approach to a theory of violence needs to begin with a look at structural violence. Focusing merely on those relatively few men who commit what we define as murder could distract us from examining and learning from those structural causes of violent death that are far more significant from a numerical or public health or human standpoint.<sup>4</sup> Gilligan observes that structural violence differs from behavioral violence in many respects. Structural violence, apart from being virtually invisible, functions more or less independently of individual behaviors; further its problematic effects operate continuously, not just sporadically. Citing Galtung, Turpin and Kurtz propose that structural violence occurs when people are harmed because of inequitable social arrangements rather than overt physical violence<sup>5</sup>. However, according to Epp and Watkinson, structural or "systemic violence is any institutionalized practice or procedure that adversely impacts on disadvantaged individuals or groups".<sup>6</sup> While direct violence is horrific and its brutality gets attention, structural violence is almost always invisible, embedded in ubiquitous social structures, normalized by stable institutions and regular experience. Structured inequities produce suffering and death as often as direct violence does, though the damage is slower, more subtle, more common and more difficult to repair. The term structural violence first used by Galtung denotes a form of violence which corresponds with the systematic ways in which the given social structure or social institution prevents individuals from achieving their full potential. Generally structural violence is believed to come from a lack of access to power to protect oneself from the detrimental effects of the economic, political and social order. If children are often the invisible and innocent victims of society's structural violence, so are their mothers. From health care and food to legal standing and political power, females get less than males everywhere in the world. With this conceptual understanding of structural violence it becomes challenging to develop a sociological imagination for perceiving violence in structures as well as in individual behavior.

### **Social Location of Structural Violence in Indian Society**

Theorists from time to time and from divergent angles have attempted to explain the differences between men and women and tried to find out the sources of women's subordination to men. Biological

explanation given by Mill suggests that the reason for women's submission was the superior strength of men. Anthropologists like Henry Maine and J.J. Bachofen hold that the patriarchal system of authority was the original and universal system of social organization. Engels established that with the use of private property the status of women declined. To him, woman was "degraded and reduced to servitude" and became a "mere instrument for production of children".

However it was not until the 19th century that serious efforts were made by social reformers to give women an honourable position in society. The national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi provided further necessary impetus towards this end. B.R.Ambedkar and Annie Beasant also raised their voice for women's cause.

Feminists for long have been trying to show that male violence is integral to patriarchal social order. Though the centrality of male violence occupies an important place in feminist discourse, yet the picture is still skewed, dismal and disproportionate in feminist writings when it comes to the issue of resistance against gendered violence. This mismatch however suggests that, even after centuries of feminist struggle, resistance to patriarchal violence is not so phenomenal and pronounced. It would however be naïve to assume that women have always been the passive victims of violence like any oppressed category, women also manoeuvre and negotiate with the given (patriarchal) structure in their everyday life and offer resistance in many ways and degrees at the individual and collective levels.

There is no denying the fact that violence is a widespread and growing problem in practically all societies, and is a complex and multi-dimensional problem. There are factors at the individual household and societal level that put women at risk or help them to reduce the risk of violence. It is embedded in the social and cultural norms. Violence against women affects all spheres of women's lives - their autonomy, productivity, capacity to earn and quality of life. When social inequalities are noticed, attempts are made to rationalize them. One outcome of this process is to assume that victims must in some way deserve their plight. It is easy to see that women do not deserve to be victims of structural violence. From health care and food, to legal standing and political power, women are disadvantaged compared to men in every country.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the U.N General Assembly in 1993 says that violence against women encompasses, "physical, sexual and

psychological violence occurring in the family and in the general community including battering, sexual abuse of female children, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, on-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation, sexual harassment, and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women, forced prostitution, and violence perpetrated or condoned by the state"<sup>7</sup>. However in order to have a useful understanding of gender violence it becomes imperative to identify where the violence towards women occurs and how institutionalized power relations keep women in a subordinate position.

### **The Family**

Family, the primary agency of socialization process, is often referred to as a place where individuals seek love, safety, security and shelter. But it is quite alarming that the institution of family is also a place that breeds some of the most inhuman forms of violence perpetrated against women. On one hand the family can be a source of positive nurturing and caring where individuals share mutual respect and love, while on the other hand, it can be a social institution which exploits the labour of its members where male power is violently expressed, and where socialization patterns disempower women. A woman's life is lived within the family, which is a small community in itself, finely graded along the triple axes of sex, age and degree of relationship with the head of the family. Female sexual identity is very often created by the family environment –the negative images of self, which often inhibit women from realizing their full potential, are often linked to familial expectation. In India women are vulnerable even from the foetal stage as sex-determination tests now provide the means to selectively abort the female foetus. During childhood she is often deprived of food and medical care compared to her male siblings. The male monopoly of domestic authority and decision making powers increased women's dependence on their husbands and grown-up sons through whom alone they could access power.

### **The Community**

In traditional societies, families have relied upon community-based support mechanisms to resolve conflict. The community also defines gender relations within the ideal family, and thereby often sets the stage for female subordination. At the level of community in India, the intersection between gender, class and caste affects both men and women from the disadvantaged groups. Many regions in India have witnessed *sati*, burning of witches, severe punishment for extra-

marital relations, and ostracisation from the community due to inter-caste marriages. The stripping and parading of women who are believed to have broken the community's rules, or to have called into question the community's honour in some way is found in some states of India. Sexual harassment by landowners and moneylenders is common. It is also common for upper caste men to rape women of lower castes. Moreover at the community level *dalit* women are often victims of atrocities by the upper caste community in villages. In the Indian context, the introduction of 73rd Amendment of the Constitution led to the legal empowerment of women and their increased participation in grass root democracy. But women's participation in political structures at the community level has led to the questioning of the traditional roles reserved for women.

### Workplace

The workplace which provides economic and social empowerment to women also becomes a place for harassment and atrocities. Typical Indian workplaces, especially those where women are a minority, often reinforce the patriarchal relations of the home by reinforcing hierarchies of gender and age. Harassment is often seen as quite natural in factories and offices throughout the world, along with other forms of violence. In *Daughters of Independence* Liddle and Joshi persuasively argue that men's control over women is central to both caste and class in India<sup>8</sup>. One feature of the capitalist system has been the development of a middle class, which is linked to the pre-capitalist caste system in many ways, including the need for elites to control women's sexuality and freedom. Following independence in India, new employment opportunities became available to some women of the middle class, especially in medicine, teaching and government. Feminist scholars have argued that the new education and employment opportunities were shaped in a manner that directly benefited men rather than women<sup>9</sup>. Discrimination, limits on physical mobility and exclusive responsibility for domestic work limits women's professional advancement.<sup>10</sup> Moreover in India a large number of women are found in unorganized sectors where there is no security for work. Where male superiority is established and thought of as a divine right and privileges are bestowed upon men since birth, women are often treated as second-class citizens.

While locating structural violence among women in India it becomes apparent that the family, the community and the workplace constitute not only a pervasive and interactive system for legitimizing violence, but the central location for acts of violence. Identifying and describing the position of women in a large, urbanising and complex

society like contemporary India is very difficult. Though the urban, educated, relatively well-off segment of Indian society condemns patriarchy and gender discrimination, oppression still continues. The undesirability of the girl child still remains entrenched in the Indian psyche which is evident from the number of cases of female foeticide through amniocentesis originally designed for detecting foetal abnormalities. This practice continues despite the recent legislation to prevent sex-determination and sex pre-selection<sup>11</sup>. Broadly, the issues that can be taken as an index of the deteriorating position of women in the age of neo-liberalism can be attributed to "structural violence, the "symbolic, psychological and physical assaults against human psyches, physical bodies, and socio-cultural integrity that emanates from situations and dominant institutions"<sup>12</sup>.

### **Exploring the Links between Violence, Patriarchal Structures and Gender Inequality**

Recognizing the complexity of the issue and the many forms of violence against women that exist, one cannot attribute a single cause for violence perpetrated against women. The violence directed at women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women. Factors contributing to these unequal power relations include socio-economic forces, the family institution where power relations are enforced, fear of female sexuality, belief in inherent superiority of males, and certain cultural sanctions that have traditionally denied women independent social status. Feminists would reiterate the fact that male violence is integral to the patriarchal social order. Violence against women in the social structure is supported and reinforced by gender norms and values that put women in subordinate position compared to men. This cuts across all social classes, religions and education levels. While variations exist in terms of class, race, geography or region, unequal gender relations have been identified by feminists and other scholars as a cornerstone of structural violence. Many of the causative factors identified are closely related to norms and values around gender and social equity. While at the level of family, male dominance and male control of wealth appear important, at macro social level, it is notions of male entitlement/ownership of women, masculinity linked to aggression and dominance, rigid gender roles, and acceptance of interpersonal violence as a means of resolving conflict that rule the roost.<sup>13</sup>

Cultural ideologies in a country like India provide a kind of legitimacy for violence against women in certain circumstances. Religious and historical traditions in the past have sanctioned the chastising and beating of wives. The physical punishment of wives

has been particularly sanctioned under the notion of entitlement and ownership of women. Male control of family wealth inevitably places decision making authority in male hands, leading to male dominance and proprietary rights over women and girls. The concept of ownership legitimizes control over women's sexuality which in many law codes has been deemed essential to ensure patrilineal inheritance. The National Research Council Review in the U.S.A states that "men raised in patriarchal family structures in which traditional gender roles are encouraged are more likely to become violent adults, to rape acquaintances and to batter their intimate partners than men raised in more egalitarian homes".<sup>14</sup> Cross-cultural, anthropological and ethnographic studies of violence against women, such as that of Levinson<sup>15</sup> and the review of 14 cultures by Counts, Brown and Campbell<sup>16</sup> also identify the role of social and cultural mores, including those around gender relations, in the acceptance and promotion of violence against women. Counts et al. found that the presence and severity of wife-beating range from very frequent to almost non-existent, although physical chastisement of wives was tolerated and even considered necessary in most societies. Cultures with a macho concept of masculinity associated with dominance, toughness or male honour also were found to have higher overall levels of violence against women<sup>17</sup>. Cultural norms around violence, gender and sexual relationships are not only manifested at the individual level but are reinforced by the family, the community and the broader social context, including the media. Dobash and Dobash<sup>18</sup> have shown how historically husbands' domination over wives, including the use of violence, has been sanctioned by cultural beliefs. In many societies violence is considered 'normal' and a prerogative of men. The socialization of boys and girls often reflects related cultural norms and values. In this regard Kenneth Boulding in his *Three Faces of Power* addresses the distribution of power by examining the social structure of power. He focuses on the hierarchical nature of power thereby claiming that exercise of power over humans is greatly complicated by persons' independent will. The old saying that "power corrupts" recognizes the potential for some exercise of power to become pathological. Boulding holds that it is not merely power which may be corrupting, but also its influence and even powerlessness. So, unequal distribution of power within the patriarchal structure can have harmful consequences for women.

### **Consequences of Violence against Women**

The consequences of violence against women are far reaching. It impacts on all aspects of women's lives, their health and that of their

children, and also on larger society. In addition there are innumerable ways in which violence perpetuates itself. The most crucial consequence of violence against women is the denial of fundamental rights. Violence within patriarchal structures impacts on women's mental health, reproductive health and sex life. Forced sex can directly lead to an unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection, including HIV/AIDS, and permanent disabilities and low performance. Violence also occurs during pregnancy with consequences not just for the woman, but also for the foetus. In terms of mental health, depression, fear, anxiety, sexual dysfunctions, neurosis, obsessive behavior and so on are common. A study in India found a powerful association between women's experiences of wife-beating and infant and foetal loss, even after controlling for factors like education.<sup>19</sup>

Women's participation has become important in all social development programmes. At the same time increasing violence against women has become a matter of serious concern. There is a growing recognition that countries cannot reach their full potential as long as women's participation is made difficult. Data on the social, economic and health costs of violence leave no doubt that violence against women undermines progress towards human and economic development. However calculating the cost of violence is a strategic intervention to make policy makers more aware about the importance and effectiveness of prevention. The direct costs for violence against women include lives lost as well as costs of services provided such as expenditures on medical treatment and psychological counseling, legal protection, providing housing and shelters for women and social services. On the other hand indirect costs for any form of violence include days of work lost, reduced productivity and its impact on overall economy. There are many indirect costs which are difficult to measure like increased morbidity and mortality, suicide and homicide, chronic pain, suffering, drug abuse, depressive disorders, loss of opportunities to pursue one's goals, and loss of self-esteem. Violence also affects interpersonal relationships and reduces the quality of life. Moreover violence undermines women's sense of self-worth, their sense of autonomy, their ability to feel and act as independent, capable women.

### **Women Resisting Violence**

Bina Agarwal in her *Gender and Land Rights in South Asia* has tried to delineate the different ways in which women offer resistance to violence and patriarchal control inflicted upon them in private and public domains. She refers to a kind of resistance which may range



from various degrees of non-compliance to patriarchal authority in everyday life to open and organized confrontation<sup>20</sup>.

The women's movement in India launched campaigns against rape, domestic violence, and sexism in advertisements as well as against state repression during caste and communal riots in the early eighties. The decade of the eighties was marked by the campaign culture in which women's groups with different priorities and ideological positions had to evolve a network amongst them to combat powerful patriarchal forces operating within the institution of family, state and civil society. Building up campaigns in an atmosphere of large scale ignorance about women's constitutional provisions forced the women's groups to approach the print media. In the initial period of campaign building, the most empowering influence was that of sharing of experience of violence in one's own life, in the neighbourhood, in the community and at the workplace. This broke the isolation brought about due to guilt and helplessness in which women find themselves when confronted by violence. Several campaigns were launched against the degrading portrayal of women in films and against newspaper accounts of victims of violence, which objectified them by concentrating on their attire and behaviour. An increasing number of women joining film and theatre-related jobs have also helped the process. Many women's rights activists have overcome the initial antipathy towards writing for mainstream newspapers or magazines and participating in radio or television programmes. Women's groups have published their newsletters and periodicals in regional languages to reach out to their sympathizers. However the initiative of the campaign against gender violence came from the Government of Maharashtra around the end of the U.N. Decade (1975-1985) for women. It sponsored the poster exhibition prepared by a Pune-based feminist group and circulated it nationally. The same government passed an Act to regulate antenatal sex determination tests. Legal awareness about the Constitution to deal with gender violence has received top priority in recent times on the electronic media. The National Commission for Women set up by the Government of India has taken up several cases of violence against women perpetrated by the custodians of law and order in different parts of India.

There is no denying the fact that in the era of globalization campaigns against gender violence has crossed boundaries. The efforts of women's organizations all over the globe have culminated in campaign resulting in slogans like "violence against women is the violation of human rights" included in the U.N charter on human rights. But despite a long history of women's movement in India and several other countries, it has not been possible to institutionalize

some counter strategies and deal with the pervasive issue of violence effectively.

### **Countering Violence through Non-Violence**

An effective strategy to counter violence against women should take into account aspects like culture, provide victims/survivors easy access to a wide range of services, and involve the community and individuals in the design of interventions. The interventions have traditionally relied on the police and the judicial system, and increasingly the health sector. Training programmes in health care settings would be most useful if they address broader issues of interaction and communication with patients, gender and sexuality, rather than focusing exclusively on the violent act. In order for training to be effective, there must be long term goals and strategies to ensure that the necessary structural changes inform the training content.

Women need to be empowered through education, employment opportunities, legal literacy, and right to inheritance. Violence also demands new levels of coordination and integration between varieties of government sectors including the criminal justice system, health, education and employment. In terms of other interventions it becomes certainly important to have more men address violence against women as an issue and to take some responsibility for changing the social norms and values that allow this gross violation of human rights to go on unquestioned.<sup>21</sup>

In common parlance non-violence is the act of abstaining from violence or physical force. But from the context of considering non-violent approach as a peace building approach, the definition is much broader. Apart from the act of abstaining, non-violence encompasses a positive action component that is directed towards social justice and the building of cultures of peace. This view of non-violence as an active process is consistent with UNESCO's declaration of the year 2000 as the year of culture of peace and non-violence.

The delineation and growing awareness of the concept of violence against women has led to the recognition of this problem by the international community. This in turn has facilitated the redefinition of peace from the perspective of gender. In this regard Johan Galtung laid the theoretical groundwork by distinguishing between direct/personal violence and indirect/structural violence in his influential article entitled "Violence, Peace and Peace Research". He put forth a definition of positive peace or a state of social justice which can be realized in the absence of structural violence. It becomes apparent that Galtung's theory of structural violence and positive peace frees

the question of “peace” from being an exclusive concern of the sovereign state and reinscribes it as a social question. Galtung’s perspective on violence seems interesting when he defines personal violence as that in which the perpetrator can be specified. In contrast, in the case of structural violence, the perpetrator cannot be specified.

A question here arises why women should be involved in the process of peace building or accepting non-violence as a strategy to combat violence? The belief that women should be at the centre of peace building and reconciliation is not based on the assumption that “gender” refers only to women. The field of sociology makes a distinction between sex, the biological differences between males and females based on genes and physical characteristics, and gender, the socially learned behaviour and expectations that distinguish masculine and feminine social roles. Boys and girls experience strong social pressure to learn and practise different ways of communicating, acting, thinking and relating according to an idealized image of what it means to be a “man” or a “woman” in their cultures. It would be naïve to assert that all women respond in a similar manner in a given situation or that women are ‘natural peace builders’. Gender identity is performed differently in different cultural contexts. There are different expectations of men and women in the home, marketplace or government office. Gender roles also shift along with social upheaval. In times of violent conflict, men and women face new roles and changing gender expectations. Because women are central caretakers in many cultures everyone suffers when women are oppressed, victimized and excluded from peace building. Their centrality to communal life makes their inclusion in peace building essential. As structural violence is related to other forms of violence, women need to be involved in peace building efforts that particularly focus on this form of violence. Moreover peace building seeks to prevent, reduce, transform and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive unrest. At the same time it empowers people to foster relationships at all levels that sustain people and their environment. Peace building supports the development of networks of relationships at all levels of society-between and within individuals, families, communities, organizations, cultural, religious, economic, political institutions and movements. Relationships are considered a form of power or social capital. By connecting people, relationships form the architecture of peace building networks that allow people to cooperate and coordinate to constructively address and prevent violence.

Women, as activists and advocates for peace, ‘wage conflict non-violently’. As peacemakers and relief aid workers, women

contribute to "reducing direct violence". As mediators, trauma healing counselors, and policy makers, women work to "transform relationships" and address the roots of violence. As educators and participants in the development process, women contribute to "building the capacity" of their communities and nations to prevent violence. Galtung, a major peace researcher identified five problems: war, inequality, injustice, environmental damage and alienation. At the same time, there are five values underlying peace such as non-violence, economic welfare, social justice, ecological balance and participation. This approach takes as its starting point the need for a global perspective and the recognition of structural violence as a major obstacle to peace. Women can play an active role in peace education which is aimed at abolishing all kinds of power relationships. The emphasis is therefore on raising awareness of structural violence and identification with struggles of all oppressed groups.

Within this framework of peace building, non-violence becomes an important strategy for women to adopt in order to combat violence. Gene Sharp defined non-violence as "non injury in thought, word and deed to all forms of life"<sup>22</sup>. Kenneth Boulding has distinguished "Three Faces of Power", (a) coercive or threat power, (b) economic power which comes out of material wealth and production, and (c) integrative power<sup>23</sup>. It is the third face of power that is sought to be mobilized in non-violent action aimed at providing an alternative to violence. In fact non-violent individuals do not seek power but power emerges from their moral conduct.<sup>24</sup> Several studies have found women to be more non-violent than men and non-violent approaches developed by women are often innovative and distinct from men, yet they are infrequently recognized at the community, national, and international levels.

Non-violence seeks to break the cycle of violence by refusing to respond violently. It is a moral method of social change which requires human commitment and not military might. Employing non-violence entails breaking from our traditional patterns of resolving conflicts, patterns which distribute power to the strongest and the most violent. Even Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. did not rule out completely occasions when one might be forced to turn to violence in self-defense. Women experience these personally violent situations more often than men. But Gandhi was convinced that women can use her moral potential for gaining the freedom that she needs and deserves. He said, "of all the evils for which man has made himself responsible, none is so degrading, so shocking or so brutal as his abuse of the female sex, to me the better half of humanity and not the weaker sex,

it is nobler of the two, for it is even today that embodiment of sacrifice, humility..."<sup>25</sup>

### Conclusion

Women play important roles in peace building and help in creating long-term sustainable peace. Structural violence against women in the form of access to education, jobs, and leadership opportunities act as serious impediments in the peace building process. Because of the patriarchal context that discriminates against women and women's experiences, women's group require ongoing opportunities to analyze and articulate the forms of violence women experience in each particular context. The social location of structural violence helps in unmasking the gruesome patriarchal structures where women are victimized and their social roles are limited. Though our country has witnessed immense women's activism, yet violence against women remain, the reason being certain invisible forms of violence are confined to the four walls of the patriarchal structure without any resistance offered by women. Here, structural violence would continue to exist if women do not realize the seriousness of the consequences which such invisible forms of violence would have on them. The social location of violence becomes imperative in order to understand and interpret the meaning of such forms of violence so that it becomes easy to remove violence from its roots which is so deeply embedded in the patriarchal structure. Women who are silent victims of the established patriarchal order need to break the silence and take responsibility to combat violence in a peaceful and non-violent manner. Moreover it would be wrong to premise that men are always perpetrators. In fact, it is increasingly becoming evident that to break this cycle of violence against women, men have to be made equal partners in the process and as a part of solution. However genuine peace would mean the elimination of unjust social and economic relations, including unequal gender relations. The values concerning "attachment with community" needs to be inculcated among the people. A sustainable notion of peace and security would not mean that "autonomy" and "power" which were conventionally seen as masculine values be replaced by feminine values. The idea here is not to replace a masculine discourse with a feminine discourse, but rather to transform the highly gendered contemporary discourse into one that privileges the values of pluralism, inclusivity and equity for human beings.

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# Foregrounding Duties: Gandhi's Notion of the Self and the Citizen

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the Gandhian approach to rights and duties by contrasting it with the liberal ideas, particularly that of John Rawls. Gandhi's approach to rights is based on a notion of duties well performed in a religious manner. He desired that the persons who conduct civil disobedience voluntarily submit themselves to the law of the land. While Gandhi expects great sacrifices in civil disobedience, Rawls hopes that it does not involve great sacrifices or a very high level of moral qualities. Unlike Rawls, who thinks that rights secure self-respect, Gandhi considers duties secure and sustain self-respect. He also takes duties beyond the realm of the state to include the family, marketplace, neighbourhood and school.*

You will permit me to say that you are on the wrong end. I can draw up a better charter of rights than you have but of what good will that be? Who will become its guardian? If you mean propaganda or popular education, you have begun at the wrong end. I suggest the right way, begin with a charter of 'Duties of Man' and I promise the rights will follow as spring follows winter. I write from experience. As a young man I began my life seeking to assert my rights and soon I discovered that I had none, not even in my wife. So I began by performing my duties and today I have far more rights than any other man I know.<sup>1</sup>

## Citizenship: Rights versus Duties Debate

WHY DOES GANDHI refuse to believe in the priority of 'rights of man'? What in his opinion is the danger with the language of rights? Despite the popularity that the language of rights enjoys today in academic and social movements, Gandhi rejects its priority.

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This paper is committed towards understanding what Gandhi could be suggesting by replacing the rights language with a language of duties as the most fundamental axis around which social movements and polity must be geared. Simultaneously I assert that political thought in modern India has confronted the issues of citizenship, state, political obligation, particularly the relationship between rights and duties as an integral concern of its anti-colonial imagination. Whenever visionaries and political thinkers imagine an ideal polity they correspondingly imagined its citizens. Gandhi is not an exception to this genre. However, we do not have any consensus on what the word 'citizenship' represents. There is no one meaning that the term 'citizenship' signifies to political theorists. Michael Walzer attempts to describe the 'citizen' "the recipient of certain benefits from the state, benefits no other social or political organization can provide".<sup>2</sup>

There is another dimension to a full understanding of the concept of citizenship, that is, a recognition that citizenship is not just a status bestowed by a public authority and realised by a group of rights that citizens enjoy. The other dimension is morally and politically loaded; it recognizes the citizen as a part of a community with attendant obligations. Though this language of duties is unfashionable today, it could be creatively employed to address the corruption that political and civil societies face today.

Citizenship can be studied in terms of i) extent (rules and norms of inclusion and exclusion) ii) content (rights and responsibilities) and iii) depth (thickness or thinness). It is this third aspect that this work focuses on. Rather than merely focusing on citizenship as a legal right, one must also see citizenship as ever redefining social process which helps individuals and communities identify themselves, and shape their conception of a good life. This is citizenship in its substantive reading.

Most of the articulations of citizenship have been in the language of rights, which is more reason for us to consider the alternative imagination that Gandhi's language provides us. T.H. Marshall sees citizenship as essentially a matter of ensuring that everyone is treated as a full and equal member of society. This membership is ensured through the increasing number of citizenship rights. He sees citizenship rights in Britain as evolving over three centuries<sup>3</sup>-civil rights in the 18th century, political rights in the 19th century, and social rights in the 20th century. The fullest expression of citizenship is seen in a liberal democratic state, according to him. Anthony Giddens contests the claims made by Marshall and argues that he seriously underestimates the struggle

that these rights are the result of. Chantal Mouffe<sup>4</sup> suggests that citizenship is not just a set of rights but a political identity that is an expression of membership in a political community. Mouffe sees citizenship as a common identity where hitherto excluded groups seek to be included. Many groups look upon this common citizenship as a form of undemocratic homogenization. This is similar to the position that Iris Marion Young promotes through her concept of 'group differentiated citizenship'<sup>5</sup>. In this view people are to be treated not just as individuals, but as members of groups. Young suggests that different kinds of rights be conceptualised for different groups reflecting their distinctive needs such as special representation rights for the groups which have been historically disadvantaged, multicultural rights for groups like immigrants and religious minorities, and self-government rights for the national minorities. The group-differentiated citizenship has been criticized by some other scholars for being contrary to the principle of equality. Clearly, to allocate priority to the language of rights seems common political sense to many scholars<sup>6</sup>. Yet Gandhi saw something quite unsatisfactory and intolerable in this language.

Discussing political duties, John Dunn comments that it is "incumbent on any person legitimately subject to a legitimate political authority to obey legitimate political commands. Virtually everyone in the modern world is subject to some or the other kind of political obligation."<sup>7</sup> He suggests that "political duty is contingent on political possibility". The theory of what is valuable in the human person is "what will determine how duty, obligation or responsibility is conceived in relation to politics". Therefore duties for him are,

acts in relation to the political realm which an agent has good reasons to perform, but which in themselves are not necessarily either political pleasures or political acts expected to yield an essential personal profit. One may enjoy or profit from the performance of one's political duties but one cannot always expect to do so.<sup>8</sup>

Gandhi is building intense inter-linkages between citizenship and the notion of duties. As the paper proceeds an attempt will be made to establish how Gandhi's citizen is self-governed in public virtues that lead people to do their duties as citizens. For the purposes of clarification and comprehension, I shall contrast the Gandhian take on the duties of a citizen with the argument of John Rawls. Rawls is the latest and quite significant representative of the liberal tradition

that tries to accommodate a notion of duties of individuals within a liberal framework.

### **Duties, Obligations, Civil Disobedience: Rawls's Rendition**

It is only natural that the liberal scheme, which emphasizes on restriction of state interference and places a premium on individual liberty, will find itself at odds with a discourse on duties of citizens. However, John Rawls gives the concept of duties and political obligation enough importance so as to dedicate to the subject an entire chapter in his *A Theory of Justice*.

John Rawls employs the social contract device to motivate and construct the 'original position'. The individual enters it through an exercise that culminates in a 'hypothetical agreement'. In Rawls's 'original position' parties accept the principle of fair play; they recognize the duties and the obligations one has to other members of the state who are acting collectively to produce certain benefits that all individuals accept. The ideal citizen is expected to be 'fully autonomous'.<sup>10</sup> This citizen must consider himself free in three significant respects. One, "they must conceive themselves and others as having the moral capacity to have a conception of the good. Not only do they have a capacity to have a conception of the good, they will also be free to change and revise the conception on reasonable and rational grounds. Given their moral power to form, revise and rationally pursue their notions of the good, their public identity as a free person is not affected by the changes over time in their conception of it."<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the citizens view themselves as free as "self-authenticating sources of valid claims". Thirdly, they are viewed as capable of taking up responsibility for their ends, and this affects how various claims are assessed, that the "society is a fair system of cooperation in which fair terms of cooperation are agreed upon by citizens so conceived".

For Rawls the moral requirements to obey the law is based on 'natural duties', more specifically on the 'natural duty to support and further just institutions'. Just what are these natural duties for? In his scheme these duties "define our institutional ties and how we become bound to one another"<sup>12</sup>. He differentiates between 'duties' and 'obligations'. I shall elaborate the substance of this difference later. The few natural duties that Rawls enumerates are: the duty to mutual aid and the duty not to harm or injure others. He sees the first as a positive duty and the second as an instance of negative duty. There is also the duty to treat everyone as a moral being. However the most important duty and the place where Rawls's

contribution is most original is on the "duty to support and extend fair institutions". This duty comprises of two other duties in turn.

(a) "We must comply with and do our share in the just institutions that exist."

(b) "We must assist in the establishment of just institutions whenever they do not exist"

That we must help each other in times of need is not a duty that is recognised by liberals alone. Surely this is not the contribution of Rawls. What is novel is the duty to support just institutions. There is also the duty to mutual respect, which is incorporated in the original position itself. These duties are qualified in terms of the cost incurred in their performance. Rawls does not want the individual to inconvenience himself too much in the fulfillment of these duties. The duty to bring about greater good is postulated only if we can bring it about relatively easily. The second part of the duty to comply with just laws, i.e. assisting in the establishment of just institutions, is to be done when it can be done with little costs to oneself. At the same time when the individual is sure to benefit from a particular social arrangement, the duties also become more compelling. This is the benefit principle of Rawls, i.e. those who benefit have more civic accountability than others. Duties are also not an end in themselves; people will all "benefit" from living in a particular kind of society. So, none of the duties is an end in itself. Even the duty to pay respect to fellow human beings is not an end in itself. He says, "everyone benefits from living in a society where the duty to mutual honour is respected".<sup>13</sup>

While the roots of natural duties are numerous, the root of obligation is the 'principle of fairness'. He writes:

Each person is under an obligation to do his part as specified by the rules of an institution whenever he has voluntarily accepted the benefits of the scheme or taken advantage of the opportunities it offers. Provided that this institution is just and fair, that is, it satisfies the two principles of justice<sup>14</sup>.

It is possible to distinguish between duties and obligations simply because they did not arise in the same manner. The distinguishing characteristics of obligations and duties in Rawls are novel indeed. Obligations always arise out of one's own choice and action. The sum and substance of the obligation is defined by the institution or the conventions that generate it. Obligations are also always owed to specific individuals. Rawls does not attribute obligations to citizens

in general, and they are specifically earned. Some scholars argue that this benefit-dependent method of arriving at obligations generates a disorderly combination of elements<sup>15</sup>.

While a duty is incurred by all, obligations are incurred through voluntary actions, promises, or assumption of office. Rawls writes, "in contrast to obligations it is characteristic of natural duties that they apply to us regardless of our voluntary actions<sup>16</sup>." This partly explains the reason behind the use of the word 'natural' before 'duties'. As we see obligations are defined narrowly. Natural duties apply on persons in general while obligations rest with smaller groups of people.

Any discussion of political obligation can not be concluded without the mention of civil disobedience. This is because the boundaries of obligations can only be drawn by understanding the sites where we aren't obligated. No theory of political obligation is complete without a corresponding notion of civil disobedience. Both Gandhi and Rawls have spent considerable time pondering the question of disobedience, not on the personal but on the platform of civil society. Rawls's civil disobedience is a non-violent, conscientious and political act, the deliberate violation of a specific law to change the specific law. It is a public act in the sense that it is undertaken in the public by making public appeals. He thinks that civil-disobedience is a non-violent act because it expresses infidelity to law by being within the limits of fidelity to law, although it remains at the outer edge of law. People, who participate in civil-disobedience, usually own it up and are ready to accept its legal consequences. It is a mode of addressing the majority's sense of justice. This, Rawls thinks, is the role that civil disobedience plays. He argues:

by engaging in civil disobedience one intends to address the majority's sense of justice and to serve a fair notice that in one's sincere and considered opinion the conditions of free cooperation are being violated. We are appealing to others to reconsider, to put themselves in our position, and to recognize that they cannot expect us to acquiesce indefinitely in the terms they now impose upon us.<sup>17</sup>

Rawls sees the issue of civil-disobedience as a problem of mutually clashing duties. The question is "at what point does the duty to comply with laws enacted by a legislative majority cease to be binding in view of the right to defend one's liberties and the duty to oppose injustice?" He further argues that it is for this reason that the theory of democracy must concern itself with the question of civil disobedience. Rawls restricts civil disobedience "to serious infringe-

ments of the first principle of justice, the principle of equal liberty, and to the blatant violation of the second part of the second principle, the principle of fair equality of opportunity"

The second requirement is that civil disobedience must be resorted to as the last resort and one must be quite sure of its necessity. He also says that the effectiveness of civil disobedience declines after a point. Civil disobedience is subject to three limitations, according to him. They are, 1) it must be directed against clear and substantial acts of injustice. The infringement to the principle of justice must be clear, 2) it must be resorted to when legal means of redress and appeals to the majority have proved to be of no avail, and 3) it must be more tactical than moral in nature. In his conclusion Rawls puts forward a radical suggestion:

If civil disobedience seems to threaten civic concord, the responsibility falls not upon those who protest but those whose abuse of authority and power justifies such opposition. For to employ the coercive apparatus of the state in order to maintain manifestly unjust institutions itself is a form of illegitimate force that men in due course have the right to resist.<sup>18</sup>

### **Duties: The Gandhian Take on the Self and the Citizen**

Gandhi said:

The true source of rights is duty. If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights, they will escape us like a will-o'-the-wisp. The more we pursue them, the farther will they fly. The same teaching has been embodied by Krishna in the immortal words: 'Action alone is thine, Leave thou the fruits alone.'<sup>19</sup>

The very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world. From one fundamental statement perhaps it is easy to define the duties of men and women and correlate every right to some corresponding duty to be first performed. Every other right can be seen as usurpation hardly worth fighting for<sup>20</sup>

While we are aware that Rawls discusses his ideas in the context of a constitutional democracy, a form of government with liberal egalitarian orientation, Gandhi's notion of citizenship is in need of an explication of the context. Parekh does this task with satisfaction. I shall briefly sketch Gandhi's conception of the state as reconstructed by Parekh. He writes:

Gandhi was most critical of the modern state. It was impersonal, it runs by rules, functioning more or less like a machine with no human beings apparently in charge of it or accepting responsibility for its actions.<sup>21</sup>

According to Gandhi this kind of a state dehumanized and demoralized the human being. Even when it gave room for responsibility it also provided many escape routes. Unlike Rawls, Gandhi was uncomfortable allocating responsibility to institutions. In his earlier days Gandhi had rejected the idea of the modern state wholesale. He thought that men and state cannot co-exist. Gandhi argued that the institution of modern state is totally unsuitable to India and its spiritual civilization. India was primarily a rural society whereas the state needed an urban civilization. Therefore he recommends a polity with minimum of statist intervention. He perhaps preferred an enlightened anarchy under which socially responsible men and women would live cooperatively. Realizing its impracticability, he opted for maximum possible freedom with minimum control. A spirit of nationalism transcending the narrow ethnic, religious, linguistic, regional, and other identities would be built. It would have a central government but not a centralized structure. It must be based on autonomous and self-governing local communities.

However as Indian anti-colonial movement matured and the need for an Indian substitute for the British government was under consideration, Gandhi's views on the nature of the state and the functions of the government underwent an important change. Slowly he began to acknowledge the importance of the state. Gandhi does not advocate consent, will, or fear as the basis of the state. State was the result of the cooperation between authority and the citizen. State to him was the highest manifestation of collective living and a central coordinating agency that an individual could relate to.

The substantive definition of citizenship is directly contingent on the conception of the self. To understand Gandhi's take on the question of ideal citizen, let us explicate the notion of the self. All major political theorists work with a conception of the self which is the cornerstone of their thought.<sup>22</sup> Each visionary creates an imagination of an ideal citizen after the image of what he/she aspires for. For some thinkers human beings are incorrigible sinners; for others they are seekers of good life, and yet some others see them as seekers of profit. This essential or unique characteristic of the self is paramount to understand the rest of the thought structure.

Often (more specifically in political thought in modern India) this conception of the self<sup>23</sup> is not clearly articulated although it

can be gauged from the rest of their philosophy. I shall attempt to reconstruct Gandhian concept of self and citizen by contrasting him with Rawls (taking Rawls to be the representative of the tradition that secures similar goals in the language of rights. Rawls gives us a definite clue as to his conception of the self in 'Kantian constructivism in Moral theory'<sup>24</sup>. The most distinct feature here is that the way in which the person is constructed is directly related to the conception of justice. The twin components of this justice are a well-ordered society<sup>25</sup> and a moral person. The construction of this moral person requires that each person has two highest moral capacities and one highest order interest. The two moral capacities are the capacity for an effective sense of justice and the capacity to form and revise a certain conception of good. He assumes that the persons at the original position are developed moral people. Their highest interest is "to protect and advance their own conception of the good as best as they can"<sup>26</sup> The more specific details are left for each person's conception of the good to fill up. Rawls's human beings live in moderate scarcity; they pursue their own interest, are rational and choose the most appropriate means. They all have a fair sense of justice and respect that. They are all also in agreement on the importance of certain life-determining goods that are 'primary' like, liberty, rights, opportunity, income and self-respect. They also have natural duties that they all acknowledge. These they owe to people in general. The most vital features of this person are that they are generally self-interested, rational, have roughly similar needs and interests which make cooperation possible, accept some principles of justice and see themselves as free and moral.

I intend to argue that the fundamental principle which Gandhi employs to secure self-respect is radically different from Rawls. In spite of the skin-deep similarities like a certain stress on securing of self-respect, morality and autonomy, the cardinal principles underneath the philosophy are opposite. The sense in which liberals understand self-respect is different from Gandhi's. In Rawls's scheme, self-respect is one of the primary goods that the human being is entitled to, and parties at any cost must avoid a situation that undermines self-respect of others. One wonders how this is possible, given that the social and economic situations of the different parties are often hierarchically placed in society.<sup>27</sup>

In his original position the parties also agree upon a natural duty of mutual respect. This asks them to treat one another with civility and be willing to explain the grounds of their actions when they have a bearing on anyone other than themselves. Rawls makes such



an assumption that self-respect is secured by legally prescribed rights, not by the socio-economic status. He is fairly broad minded in the scope of this self-respect. The first principle is not adequate for the guarantee of self-respect; one needs to ensure that to maintain self-respect the second principle is equally important. Rights then are the guarantee of self-respect in the Rawlsian paradigm. However in Gandhi it shall be duties

*Abstract Individual in Isolation v/s Gandhian Integration of the Self*

Gandhi's ashrams were not in the remote forests of reclusion but were the very centre of organised life. For Gandhi a life that is not dedicated to active service of mankind will not attain spiritual self-realisation. Gandhian spirituality is expressed through ordinary activities of life, which is impossible if the self is seen in isolation. He believed that each action of a person would in turn affect and influence others. Let us import the Gandhian model of concentric circles to understand this idea better. Consider the person as a stone thrown in a pond and concentric circles as the society where the person is situated. The first and most immediate circle is the most defined and strong, and subsequent circles become weaker. This is how Gandhi imagines political duties, the strongest sense of obligation to the immediate context and fainting duties as the circles advance farther. Very often Gandhi talked about duties as the originator of rights. Often he mentioned that rights are impossible without duties; many a time he said that there are no rights, only duties.

All rights to be deserved and preserved come from duty well done. Thus the very right to live accrues to us only when we do the duty of citizenship of the world. From this very fundamental statement perhaps it is easy enough to define the duties of man and women and correlate every right to some corresponding duty to be first performed. Every other right can be shown to be usurpation hardly worth fighting for.<sup>28</sup>

For each person who has a right we correspondingly assume a person whose duty it is to see this right fulfilled. Every single person has some rights which shall be someone else's duty. "Every duty performed confers upon one certain rights, whilst the exercise of every right carries with it certain corresponding obligations. And so the never-ending cycle of duty and right goes ceaselessly on".<sup>29</sup> This circle, if executed in the correct manner shall ensure rights attained through duties rendered. Everyone then has duties towards everyone else if all are to enjoy rights.

*Secular Self's Rights v/s Spiritual Self's Duties*

Gandhi assumes a strategy followed by Hindu philosophy, which finds religious sanction to validate and universalize a conception of rights and duties. Gandhi's reading of the *Gita* was characteristically his own. He used this interpretation of the *Gita* not just to define a strategy of politics but to determine his work ethics. 'Gyan' for Gandhi became the way to understand the political possibilities and the alternatives of action that was present. 'Bhakti' became the highest degree of love that a human being could display, love that would result in great degree of understanding of the plight of others. 'Karma' became not just a path of action but also a path of service. We find Gandhi using the language of religion to validate his notion of duties. In the next citation notice how effortlessly how Gandhi turns 'non-cooperation', which most traditions would assign as a right, into a religious duty. Given the hold religion has on people, it was strategically as well as politically a productive idea to invoke religion.

I venture to submit that the Bhagvadgita is a gospel of non-cooperation between the forces of darkness and those of light. If it is to be literally interpreted, Arjuna representing a just cause was enjoined to engage in bloody warfare with the unjust Kauravas. TulSIDas advises the 'sant' (the good) to shun the 'asant' (the evil doers). The Zend Avesta represents a perpetual duel between Ormuzd and Ahriman, between whom there is no compromise. To say of the Bible that it taboos non-co-operation is not to know Jesus, a prince among passive resisters, who uncompromisingly challenged the might of the Sadducees and the Pharisees and, for the sake of truth, did not hesitate to divide sons from their parents. And what did the Prophet of Islam do? He non-cooperated in Mecca in a most active manner so long as his life was not in danger, and wiped the dust of Mecca off his faith when he found that he and his followers might have uselessly to perish, and fled to Medina and returned when he was strong enough to give battle to his opponents. The duty of non-cooperation with unjust men and kings is as strictly enjoined by all the religions as is the duty of cooperation with just men and kings. Indeed, most of the scriptures of the world seem even to go beyond non-cooperation and prefer violence to effeminate submission to a wrong. The Hindu religious tradition.....clearly proves the duty of non-cooperation. Prahlad dissociated from his father, Meerabai from her husband, Bibhishan from his brutal brother<sup>30</sup>.

He, at this moment, legitimizes his notion of duties with the help of apparently timeless scriptures. He brings about a certain similarity between the aim of the church and the aim of the state. Citizenship, civility and duty become a more general process of civilization as

well as a way of life. He uses world religions to provide for a source of common humanity and civic virtue. Usually when religious leaders discuss the idea of an obligation, it is assumed that people ought to follow that model. Yet there is also a belief that people are inherently incapable of achieving it. Here Gandhi makes a significant shift, he seems to believe in the capability of humans to practise and reach the highest ideals, and nothing that he prescribes is too difficult for a willing mind.

*Moral as Autonomous v/s Self Realised in Moral Excellence*

Gandhi's notion of self was infused with social conscience and commitment. The self got a socio-political and activist orientation so that the self could excel in the moral domain. Gandhi's subject is essentially moral and only secondarily a matter of power or legality. In Gandhi the society itself is the chief moralizing agent and therefore represents the highest moral value. This self was a moral being, blessed with moral discernment, deciphering who to give authority to, loyalty to, and when or under what conditions to withdraw it.

Most men do not understand the complicated machinery of the government. They do not realize that every citizen silently but nevertheless renders himself responsible for every act of the government. And it is quite proper to support it so long as the actions of the government are bearable. But when they hurt him or his nation, it becomes his responsibility to withdraw this support.<sup>31</sup>

According to Iyer, Gandhi had envisaged a totally new system of moral sanctions in society that were based on a principle of harmony of nature and society. Both nature and society for Gandhi were subject to the same law of justice. The measure of tolerance and civility was a general acceptance of non-violence in the society. In the Gandhian scheme the state cannot claim any legitimacy or authority as long as it remains a coercive institution. He asked citizens to appeal to the law of dharma in case they were feeling wronged. The repository of this dharma also shall be the individual himself. He believed that men are capable of raising their moral capabilities to such an extent that exploitation would be reduced to the minimum. The moral authority of the individual is derived from his pursuit of satya. This I argue is a big alternative to the liberal theory of moral worth, or equal worth of all people as propounded by Kant. Human beings are not worthy when they are free to do anything they want, but they are worthy when they want to do something of moral excellence. In the contemporary times when we suffer and persist with widespread

corruption, such an alternative acquires even more meaning.

In Swaraj based on ahimsa, people need not know their rights, but it is necessary for them to know their duties. There is no duty but creates a corresponding right, and those only are true rights which flow from a due performance of one's duties. Hence rights of true citizenship accrue only to those who serve the State to which they belong. And they alone can do justice to the rights that accrue to them. Everyone possesses the right to tell lies or resort to goondaism. But the exercise of such right is harmful both to the exerciser and society. But to him who observes truth and non-violence comes prestige, and prestige brings rights. And people, who obtain rights as a result of performance of duty, exercise them only for the service of society, never for themselves. Swaraj of a people means the sum total of the Swaraj (self-rule) of individuals. And such Swaraj comes only from performance by individuals of their duty as citizens. In it no one thinks of his rights. They come, when they are needed, for better performance of duty<sup>32</sup>.

#### *Rawlsian and Gandhian Scheme from the Perspective of Citizens*

In the Gandhian scheme the most the state can serve is to provide a congenial environment for such moral excellence. However the state must / can not become a positive instrument for this. So the citizen's obligation to accept the authority of the state at any given time is conditional on the extent to which the laws of the state are just and non-repressive. Contrasting it with the picture that Rawls imagines, one sees that the individual citizen might have reasons to obey something according to the fairness principle. However the citizen might think it unfair. Yet, irrespective of his conviction to the injunction, he might still obey since he has consistently received benefits from the state. This possible lack of conviction is what Gandhi addresses.

Return to the village means a definite voluntary recognition of the duty of bread labour and all it connotes. Compulsory labour to the master is a state of slavery; willing obedience to one's father is the glory of sonship. Similarly compulsory obedience to the law of bread labour breeds poverty, disease and discontent. Willing obedience to it must bring contentment and health. The village industries association is the experiment in willing bread labour.<sup>33</sup>

The structure of his concept of moral respect through performing one's duties involves the notion of voluntarism. This addresses the problem of the possibility of lack of conviction in any kind of obedience. If it is not voluntary then this submission is not consistent

with the self-respect that the person has. This willed responsibility is what Gandhi emphasizes on and invests in building up.<sup>34</sup>

### **Right/ Duty to Disobey**

Gandhi's sacred right to civil disobedience was based upon a duty, the duty not to partake in evil of any sort. He believed that a citizen who barter this sacred right of disobedience with the corruption of the state partakes in its corruption. He thus loses his integrity and self-respect<sup>35</sup>. This notion of self-respect in Gandhi penetrates all the other concepts of his, and makes him reject the language of rights and crusade for duty-based political anchorage.

Gandhi believed that it is the duty of each citizen to oppose unjust laws; he thinks that those people who have self-respect cannot but oppose such laws. This also meant that self-respect demands that 'civil' remains paramount in his civil disobedience. He did not ascertain any rules regarding the practice of civil disobedience. He thought that man's conscience and his experience would be the guide in such matters, however yet again this duty to disobey was intricately related to the notion of the self. Iyer points this connection in his work on Gandhi. Iyer argues that Gandhi advised a lot of caution to anyone who could be contemplating on how to render civil disobedience. However he did not ever contemplate on the decision to disobey itself. Gandhi argues that the citizen cannot possibly give up his right to disobey without surrendering his self-respect itself. Gandhi thought that if civil disobedience is truly civil then even the opponent will know that there is no intention to harm his person. It also required the willing acceptance of the consequences of his actions, as per the law of the land. For Gandhi, the reasons that would justify civil disobedience were included first, if the law demeaned or degraded the subjects, insulted them, and if it required them to act in a manner that was inconsistent with human dignity. Secondly, if the law is against the citizen's conscience or deepest convictions, one could resort to civil disobedience. This would involve a risk, in case the person's convictions are mistaken; however Gandhi thought that this risk needed to be taken. The third ground is if the law is blatantly unjust in its intent or outcome and finally if it is repugnant to the vast majority of citizens. It is more than just a legal concept. Gandhi said:

I want to deal with one great evil that is afflicting society today. The capitalist and the zamindar talk of their rights, the labourer on the other hand his...If instead of insisting on rights everyone does his duty,

there will immediately be a rule of order established among mankind. There is no such thing as the divine right of kings to rule. It is therefore necessary to understand the co-relation of rights and duties. I venture to suggest that rights that do not flow directly from duty performed well are not worth having. They will be usurpations sooner discarded the better. A wretched parent who claims obedience from his children without first doing his duty excites nothing but contempt. Force that performance of duties naturally generates is the non-violent and invincible force that Satyagraha brings into being.<sup>36</sup>

Rawls as well as Gandhi desire that the persons who conduct civil disobedience voluntarily submit themselves to the law of the land. Both of them also desired that their methods are not coercive. Yet Gandhi's civil disobedience demands more from the person to be able to perform civil disobedience<sup>37</sup> and be taken seriously for doing it. This in turn is reflected in the primacy that he gives to the rendering of duties. Vinit Haksar argues that Gandhi stipulates many personal qualifications to the civil disobedient. The civil disobedient must be civil, disciplined, strong and willing to undergo suffering, is patient and is devoted to truth and is keen on providing service to the community. Haksar argues that "Rawlsian civil disobedience is certainly a much cosier and less demanding practice than Gandhian civil disobedience. Thus it does not require the same high level of moral qualities among the civil disobedient"<sup>38</sup>.

While Gandhi expects great sacrifices from the civil disobedients, Rawls hopes that the justified civil disobedience does not involve great sacrifices, so that its participants do not require very high level of moral qualities. Rawls also expects that the authorities in a 'nearly just' state will respond with a noble and serious response. Haksar also argues that Gandhi's civil disobedience brings the protestors into a closer relationship with the authorities, by involving a dialogue with the authorities at the trial and the infliction of punishment on the protestors. This is why Gandhi had a greater hope in civil disobedience as having the power to dissolve the tyranny of the tyrant.

In Rawls' scheme, people who are to practice civil disobedience are rendered reluctant. He restricts the use of civil disobedience to instances of "substantial and clear violations of justice". When Rawls confines civil disobedience only to obvious and clear cases of injustice, he also specifies that civil disobedience is not recommended for the violations of the difference principle,<sup>39</sup> because the violations of this principle is difficult to ascertain.<sup>40</sup> Thus we see that Rawls confines the use of civil disobedience only to the serious violations of the liberty principle.

In the Gandhian scheme, justice to the self and the state required the maintenance of the self-respect and moral excellence that the person could earn. It's earning and its maintaining was the most important duty and, this done, the person was entitled to the consequent rights. As Raghavan Iyer points out, each citizen in Gandhian utopia renders himself responsible for each action of the state. "Now that we are a free nation, every individual can willingly participate in the activities of the Government of the country, provided he fulfils his duties by realizing the full responsibilities of the citizen of an independent country"<sup>41</sup>.

One could imagine two societies. In the first kind of society the individuals are taught to develop their talents to make themselves happier. However they are not required to do so. In the other they are taught that they have a moral responsibility to themselves and to others to develop their talents. Even if the ultimate talent developed amounts to the same there still is a crucial difference. While in the first the children are being taught to be independent and self-absorbed, in the second the children are being taught to become interdependent and morally tied to others. It is this new bedrock of Gandhian conception of moral duties which is worth analysing. This is how the Gandhian notion of self-respect is different from the way in which liberals administer 'self respect' to each individual. To let people enjoy an equal opportunity to act according to their will is one way of showing respect to them. To expect them to act well is another, sometimes more respectful than the former. Human will and self-worth is affirmed when one does one's duty well. "A pure fast, like duty, is its own reward. I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must".<sup>42</sup> In Gandhi, we find a conception of duties that contrast at various levels to the ideas of Rawls. It is not abstract; it is infused with a thick conception of the good as opposed to liberal emphasis on a thin conception of the good. The liberals would not see self-respect if there were no rights, Gandhi would not recognise it if there were no duties.

This is not to eulogize Gandhi's conception with a 'holier than thou' approach towards the western canons that Gandhi is compared with. Instead it is to recognize the creative possibilities that this particular conception of citizenship presents to us, in the times when corruption, evasion of one's responsibilities and sordid disgrace of communalism characterise the government and the governed alike. We see those who participate in engineered communal riots often brag about their crime with pride which scares and numbs. Gandhi's moral concerns could provide a creative beginning for an alternate view of the political and what it means to belong to a community.

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14. Ibid, pp. 342.
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16. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1972), pp. 114.
  17. Ibid, pp 382.
  18. Ibid, pp. 391.
  19. *Young India*, January 8, 1925.
  20. Mahatma Gandhi, in a message to Julian Hexley, 1947.
  21. Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi's Political Philosophy*, (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), pp. 110-141.
  22. Though we apprehend the trap of essentialism here one could hardly work without such fundamental first principles in place, principles from where one can build upon, and foundations that can explain to us the rest of the structure of a theory.
  23. Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Concept of Man in Political Theory', *Social Scientist*, 8, 3 (Oct., 1979) pp. 15-30.
  24. This is a three lecture series which attempts to establish how justice as fairness and the original position are an illustration of the Kantian constructivism in moral theory.
  25. By a "well ordered" society Rawls means the following- (a) A society regulated by a public conception of justice. (b) Members of this public conception of justice view themselves and one another in their political and social relations as free and moral persons. (c) Members are free in that they think they are entitled to make claims in the design of their common institutions in the name of their own fundamental aims and high order interests.
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## The Spinning Wheel and the Seed: Gandhi's Legacy, Humanity's Hope

GANDHI LIVES AS a perennial source of inspiration and political innovation to defend our freedoms. Globalisation as a project is a plan to extinguish all freedoms of people through the total control of trade, technology, and property rights. They include freedoms of rivers to flow and organisms to evolve, of farmers to save seeds and grow crops, of consumers to be free to choose what they eat and know how their food is produced.

Globalisation is often presented as a process of new interconnections between societies. However, if it is geographical, it is about the global reach of giant corporations, not about a global joining of the hearts of people worldwide. But the real project of globalisation is colonization and commodification of the very resources and processes that give us life - our biodiversity, our food and our water.

Patents on life and the new biotechnologies are today's tools of imperialism and they are a core part of the global "constitution" called the W.T.O. rules of free trade in the form of Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights [TRIPS]. The phrase "Trade Related" had to be forcefully linked to intellectual property precisely because intellectual property has no place in a trade treaty and patents should not have been extended to cover life forms as they were under Act 273 [b] of TRIPS which forces countries to patent life forms, in particular micro-organisms and genetically engineered plants and animals. These rules and laws were made by and for corporations. As a Monsanto spokesperson stated about the drafting of TRIPS: "We were the patient, the diagnostician, the physician."

Patents of life are a total control system. They allow corporations to claim ownership over life forms - micro - organisms, plants, animals. They allow corporations to define the acts of saving and sharing

seeds as "intellectual property crimes." And they allow the crime of bio-piracy-the theft of traditional knowledge.

A patent is an exclusive right to own, make, sell, produce and use a patented product. A patent on seed implies that a farmer saving seed is an "intellectual property thief." But it means more. A system in which seed has become a corporate monopoly, a system in which a few companies control the seed supply, is in effect a system of slavery for farmers. Where the freedom of seed disappears, the freedom of farmers also disappears.

That is why, in 1987, when I first came to know about GATT, TRIPS and Patents on life, I searched for ways to defend the freedom of biodiversity and the freedom of peasants. And Gandhi's spinning wheel inspired me to saving seeds to save small farmers and protect life.

### Spinning Freedom

It was to regenerate livelihoods in India that Gandhi thought of the spinning wheel as a symbol of liberation and a tool for development. Power-driven mills were the model of development in that period of early industrialization. However, the hunger of mills for raw material and markets was the reason for a new poverty, created by the destruction of livelihoods either by diverting land and biomass from local subsistence to the factory, or by displacing local production through the market.

Gandhi had said: "Anything that millions can do together becomes charged with unique power." The spinning wheel had become a symbol of such power. "The wheel as such is lifeless, but when I invest it with symbolism, it becomes a living thing for me."

When Gandhi described the Charkha in 1908, in the *Hind Swaraj* as a panacea for the growing pauperism of India, he had never seen a spinning wheel. Even in 1915, when he returned to India from South Africa, he had not actually seen a spinning wheel. But he saw an essential element of freedom from colonialism in discarding the use of mill-woven cloth. He set up handlooms in the Satyagraha Ashram at Sabarmati, but could not find a spinning wheel or a spinner, who were normally women. In 1917, Gandhi's disciple Gangaben Majumdar started a search for the spinning wheel, and found one in Vijapur in the Baroda State. Quite a few people there had spinning wheels in their homes, but had long since consigned them to the lofts as useless lumbers. They now pulled them out, and soon Vijapur Khadi gained a name for itself. And Khadi and the spinning wheel rapidly became the symbol for India's independence movement.

The spinning wheel symbolized a technology that conserves

resources, people's livelihoods and people's control over their livelihoods. In contrast to the imperialism of the British textile industry, the Charkha was decentred and labour-generating, not labour-displacing. It needed people's hands and minds, instead of treating them as surplus, or as mere inputs into an industrial process. This critical mixture of decentralization, livelihood-generation, resource conservation and strengthening of self-reliance were essential to undo the waste of centralization, livelihood-destruction, resource depletion and creation of economic and political dependence that had been engendered by the industrialization associated with colonialism.

Gandhi's spinning wheel is a challenge to notions of progress and obsolescence that arise from absolutism and false universalism in concepts of science and technology development. Obsolescence and waste are social constructs that have both a political and ecological component. Politically, the notion of obsolescence gets rid of people's control over their lives and livelihoods by defining productive work as unproductive and removing people's control over production in the name of progress. It would rather waste hands than waste time. Ecologically too, obsolescence destroys the regenerative capacity of nature by substituting manufactured uniformity in place of nature's diversity. This induced dispensability of poorer people on the one hand and diversity on the other constitutes the political ecology of technological development guided by narrow and reductionist notions of productivity. Parochial notions of productivity, perceived as universal, rob people of control over their means of reproducing life and rob nature of her capacity to regenerate diversity.

Ecological erosion and destruction of livelihoods are linked to one another. Displacement of diversity and displacement of people's sources of sustenance both arise from a view of development and growth based on uniformity created through centralized control. In this process of control, reductionist science and technology act as handmaids for economically powerful interests. The struggle between the factory and the spinning wheel continues as new technologies emerge.

As seeds are genetically engineered and patented, a crisis is being engineered for farmers and farming. And the seed becomes the charkha of today. That is why I started Navdanya.

### **Diversity and Freedom**

The Green Revolution was an exemplar of the deliberate destruction of diversity. The new biotechnologies are repeating and deepening these tendencies, rather than reversing them.

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Further, the new technologies in combination with patent monopolies being pushed through intellectual property rights regimes in GATT and other trade platforms as well as the biodiversity convention are threatening to transform the diversity of life forms into mere raw material for industrial production and limitless profits. They are simultaneously threatening the regenerative freedom of diverse species, and the free and sustainable economy of small peasants and producers, which is based on nature's diversity and its utilization.

The seed, for example, reproduces itself and multiplies. Farmers use seed both as grain as well as for the next year's crop. Seed is free, both in the ecological sense of reproducing itself, as well as in the economic sense of reproducing the farmers' livelihood.

This seed freedom is however a major obstacle for seed corporations. If the market for seed has to be created, the seed has to be transformed materially, so that reproducibility is blocked; and its status has to be changed legally so that, instead of being the common property of farming communities, it becomes the patented private property of Seed Corporation.

As my involvement in these issues grew, the seed started to take shape as the site and symbol of freedom in the age of manipulation and monopoly of life in its diversity. Ethically and ecologically, unrestrained biotechnology development gives new tools for manipulation; patents offer new tools for monopoly ownership of that which is by its very nature free. I thought Gandhi's Spinning wheel, which had become such an important symbol of freedom, could be used as a sign of resistance and creativity. In smallness lay its power.

Ours was not the first seed conservation programme; genetic resources have always been collected for breeding. The risks for breeding towards uniformity led to the emergence of government gene banks in the 1970s. However, while gene banks collect biodiversity from farmers' fields, they do not conserve it through and with farmers. Instead, diversity flows from farmers' fields to gene banks and then on to the corporate breeders, but is systematically eroded at the source. The farmers then become mere consumers of corporate seed, which in the future will also have IPR protection, thus forcing farmers to buy seed every year. This excludes the farmer from playing the critical role of conserver of genetic diversity and innovator in the utilization and development of seed. It robs farmers of their rights to their biological and intellectual heritage. It also separates conservation from production, and scientists from farmers. We wanted to build a programme in which farmer and scientists

relate horizontally rather than vertically, in which conservation of biodiversity and production of food go hand in hand, and in which farmers' knowledge is strengthened, not robbed.

The native seed has become a system of resistance against monocultures and monopoly rights. The shift from uniformity to diversity respects the rights of all species and is sustainable. Diversity is also a political imperative because uniformity goes hand in hand with centralization, while diversity demands de-centred control.

Conservation of diversity is, above all, the commitment to let alternatives flourish in society and nature, in economic systems and in knowledge systems. Cultivating and conserving diversity is no luxury in our times. It is a survival imperative, and the precondition for the freedom of all, the big and the small. In diversity, the smallest has a place and significance. Allowing the small to flourish is to me the real test of freedom - in the life of an individual, the life of an organisation, the life of a society, and the life of this planet. It is this connection between diversity, de-centredness and democracy, which has guided my ideas and actions, at the local as well as the global level.

### **Seed Saving: Our Ethical Duty, Our Human Right**

Seed is the first link in the food chain. In Sanskrit, Bija, the seed, means the source of life. Saving seed is our duty, sharing seed is our culture.

The shift from farm-saved seed to corporate monopolies of the seed supply is also a shift from biodiversity to monocultures in agriculture. The District of Warangal in Andhra Pradesh used to grow diverse legumes, millets and oilseeds. Seed monopolies created crop monocultures of cotton, leading to disappearance of millions of nature's evolution and farmers' breeding.

Monocultures and uniformity increase the risks of crop failure as diverse seeds adapted to diverse ecosystems are replaced by rushed introduction of unadapted and often untested seeds into the market. When Monsanto first introduced Bt Cotton in India in 2002, the farmers lost Rs. 1 billion due to crop failure. Instead of 1,500 kg per acre as promised by the company, the harvest was as low as 200 kg. Instead of increased incomes of Rs. 10,000 per acre, farmers ran into losses of Rs. 6400 per acre.

In the state of Bihar, when corn seed was displaced by Monsanto's hybrid corn, the entire crop failed creating Rs. 4 billion losses and hence increased poverty for the desperately poor farmers.

Poor peasants of the South cannot survive seed monopolies. That is why the case of Percy Schemeiser will decide the fate not just of



one Canadian farmer but billions of peasants. The unjust and unethical case brought by Monsanto against Percy is a double crime against farmers. Firstly by creating and enforcing illegitimate patent rights to seed, it robs us of our human right and human duty to be seed savers. Secondly, it rewards the polluter with enhanced property rights and profits. The principle of "polluter pays" has been transformed into the "polluter gets paid" principle. This perverse jurisprudence must be corrected for the sake of all farmers, and all species. Farmers' freedoms must come before corporate monopoly. Percy's rights as a farmer are symbolic of the human rights of all farmers.

### **The Suicide Economy of Corporate Globalisation**

As farming is delinked from the earth, the soil, the biodiversity, the climate and linked to global corporations and global markets, and the generosity of the earth is replaced by the greed of corporations, the viability of small farmers and small farms is destroyed. Suicides are the most tragic and dramatic symptom of the crisis of survival faced by Indian peasants.

1997 witnessed the first emergence of farmer suicides in India. Rapid increase in indebtedness was at the root of farmers taking their lives. Debt is a reflection of a negative economy, a loosing economy. Two factors have transformed the positive economy of agriculture into a negative economy for peasants- the rising costs of production and the falling prices of farm commodities. Both these factors are rooted in the policies of trade liberalization and corporate globalization.

In 1998, the World Bank's structural adjustment policies forced India to open up its seed sector to global corporations like Cargill and Monsanto. The global Corporations changed the input economy overnight. Farm-saved seeds were replaced by corporate seeds, which needed fertilizers and pesticides and could not be saved.

The second pressure Indian farmers are facing is the dramatic fall in process of farm produce as a result of free trade policies of the W.T.O. The WTO rules for trade in agriculture are in essence rules for dumping. They have allowed an increase in agribusiness subsidies while preventing countries from protecting their farmers from the dumping of artificially cheap produce. High subsidies of \$ 400 billion combined with forced removal of import restrictions is a ready-made recipe for farmers' suicides. Global prices have dropped from \$ 216 per ton in 1995 to \$ 133 in 2001 for wheat, \$ 98.2 per ton in 199 to \$ 49.1 in 2001 for cotton and \$ 273 in 1995 to \$ 178 ton for soyabean. This reduction to half the price is not due to a doubling in productivity

but due to an increase in subsidies and an increase in market monopolies controlled by a handful of agribusiness corporations.

Thus the Government in the United States of America pays \$ 193 per ton to U.S. Soya farmers, which artificially lowers the price of soya. Due to removal of quantitative restrictions and lowering of tariffs, cheap soya has destroyed the livelihoods of coconut growers, mustard farmers and producers of sesame, groundnut and soya.

Similarly, cotton producers in the U.S. are given a subsidy of \$ 4 billion annually. This has brought the cotton prices down artificially, allowing the U.S. to capture world markets which were earlier accessible to poor African countries such as Burkina Faso, Benin and Mali. The subsidy of \$ 230 per acre in the U.S. is genocidal for the African farmers. African cotton farmers are losing \$ 250 million every year. That is why small African countries walked out of the Cancun negotiations, leading to the collapse of the W.T.O. ministerial.

The rigged prices of globally traded agriculture commodities are stealing incomes from poor peasants of the South. Analysis carried out by the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology shows that due to falling farm prices, Indian peasants are losing \$ 26 billion or Rs. 1.2 trillion annually. This is a burden their poverty does not allow them to bear. Hence the epidemic of farmers' suicides.

India was among the countries that questioned the unfair rules of W.T.O. agriculture and led the G-22 alliance along with Brazil and China. India with other Southern countries addressed the need to safeguard the livelihoods of small farmers from the injustice of free trade based on high subsidies and dumping. Yet at the domestic level, official agencies in India are in deep denial of any links between free trade and farmers' survival.

An example of this denial is a Government of Karnataka report on "Farmers Suicide in Karnataka - A Scientific Analysis". The report while claiming to be "scientific", makes unscientific reductionist claims that the farmers suicides have only psychological causes, not economic ones, and identified alcoholism as the root cause of suicides. Therefore, instead of proposing changes in agricultural policy, the report recommends that farmers require boosting up their self-respect and self-reliance. And ironically, its recommendations for farmers' self-reliance are changes in the Karnataka Land Reforms Act to allow larger land holdings and leasing. These are steps towards the further decimation of small farmers who have been protected by land "ceilings" an upper limit on land ownership and policies that only allow peasants and agriculturalists to own agricultural land [part of the land to the tiller policies of the Devaraj Urs government].

While the "expert committee" report identified "alcoholism" as

the main cause for suicides, the figures of this "scientific" claim are inconsistent and do not reflect the survey. On page 10, the report states in one place that 69 percent of the suicide victims were alcoholics. Five lines later it states that 17 percent were "alcohol and illicit drinkers". It also states that the majority of suicide victims were small and marginal farmers and the majority had high levels of indebtedness. Yet debt is not identified as a factor leading to suicide. On page 32 of the report it is stated that of the 105 cases studied among the 3544 suicides which had occurred in five districts during 2000 - 2001, 93 had debts and 54 percent of the victims had borrowed from private sources and money lenders. More than 90% suicide victims were in debt. Yet a table on page 63 has mysteriously reduced debt as a reason for suicide to 2.6%, and equally mysteriously, "suicide victims having a bad habit" has emerged as the primary cause of farmers' suicides.

The government is desperate to delink farmers suicides from economic processes linked to globalisation such as rise in indebtedness and increased frequency of crop failure due to higher ecologic vulnerability arising from climate change and drought and higher economic risks due to introduction of untested and un-adapted seeds. This is evident in recommendation no. 4.3 24.3: "The government should launch prosecution on the responsible persons involved in misleading the public and government by providing false information about farmers' suicide as crop failure or indebtedness" [page 113 of expert committee report].

However, farmers' suicides cannot be delinked from indebtedness and the economic distress small farmers are facing. Indebtedness is not new. Farmers have always organized for freedom from debt. In the nineteenth century the so called "Deccan Riots" were farmers' protests against the debt trap into which they had been pushed to supply cheap cotton to the textile mills in Britain. In the eighties they formed peasant organizations to fight for debt relief from public debt linked to Green Revolution inputs. However, under globalisation, the farmer is losing her/his social, cultural, economic identity as a producer. A farmer cannot emerge as a "consumer" of costly seeds and costly chemicals sold by powerful global corporations through powerful landlords and money lenders locally. This combination is leading to corporate feudalism, the most inhuman, brutal and exploitative convergence of global corporate capitalism and local feudalism, in the face of which the farmer as an individual victim feels helpless.

It is necessary to stop this war against small farmers. It is necessary to re-write the rules of trade in agriculture. It is necessary to change

our paradigms of food production. Feeding humanity should not depend on the extinction of farmers and extinction of species. Another agriculture is possible and necessary- an agriculture that protects farmers' livelihoods, the earth and its biodiversity and public health.

### From the Suicide Economy to Living Economics

Gandhi's creative vision of *Swadeshi*, *Swaraj*, *Satyagraha* and *Sarvodaya* inspires us to build living economies and living democracies. In his legacy we find hope, we find freedom, we find our own creativity. Our seed saving is a resistance to seed monopolies and seed patents. And when our government begins to implement TRIPS as it has done through three amendments of our Patent Act and the creation of new plant variety legislation, we remember Gandhi's words: "As long as the superstition that people should obey unjust laws exists, so long will slavery exist."

And we renew our commitment to the *Bija Satyagraha*. Like Mahatma Gandhi started the *Salt Satyagraha* to protest against the colonization of salt by the Salt Laws imposed by the British Empire, people's movements in India are committed to the *Bija satyagraha* based on non-cooperation with unjust and immoral IPR laws being imposed by MNCs and the rich countries. These laws are:

- The protection of plant varieties and farmers rights act which establishes MNC's monopoly over seeds, makes Indian farmers bio-serfs and robs them of their age old freedoms to save, exchange and sell seeds;
- The amended patent act which allows seeds, plants, animals, genes and all life forms to be patented and indigenous knowledge to be pirated ; and
- The biodiversity act which gives free access to our genetic wealth and indigenous knowledge to bio-pirates within and outside India.

As genetic pollution threatens our biodiversity and globalisation threatens our farmers, we create living economies and living democracies based on *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj*. Just as the seed has the potential to germinate, evolve and renew itself perennially, Gandhi's legacy carries the seeds for the freedoms of humans and all species. Gandhi's legacy is humanity's hope.

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## The 'What and Why' of Nai Talim

### Introduction

**M**ODERN MAN LIVES in the world of material abundance and intellectual power, yet he is seen to be not properly adjusted to his new world of advanced scientific knowledge and huge technological power. The crisis he faces is not of matter or money; it rather is a moral and spiritual crisis. As a result, there is the feeling of anxiety and despair. Gandhian philosophy of sarvodaya is an attempt at the reformation of society and also the re-orientation of human mind. Gandhi feels that for the remaking of society, education as a science of individual development should march along with social progress. And the aim of education needs to be the integral development of human personality- physical, intellectual and spiritual.

### Gandhi's Concept of Basic Education/Nai Talim

Mere literacy, in Gandhian sense, is not education. It is like reading Gita without knowing or realizing its inner significance. The education that is imparted at present and different literacy programmes introduced by the Government at different times, make people literate, but devoid of neither wisdom nor good conduct. Since exterior education does not touch the springs of personality, interior education can draw out what is lying dormant in the human beings. Gandhi once wrote: "When I was a child, there used to be two blind performers in Rajkot. One of them was a musician. When he played on his instrument, his finger swept the string with an unerring instinct and everybody listened spellbound to his playing. Similarly there are chords in every human heart. If we only know how to strike the right chord we bring out the music." Likewise, the nature of education should be such that it can touch the core of the individual and awaken the latent in man.

This doctrine, therefore, rests on the assumption of the inherent goodness of man. If human being is not innately good, goodness cannot be created or awakened in him. A thing cannot come out of nothing. And the law of causation states that every thing has a cause out of which it comes. This is the Satkaryavada of Samkhya philosophy. Thus human being is potent with courage, strength and other moral virtues. Education is just to sprout it forth. Education,

therefore, is a process of leading the inward nature to its fulfillment. All true development is self-development. At the same time, education that neglects the physical faculties for the exposition of the inner violates the basic purpose of education. It is Gandhi who insists on equal value of both by giving equal importance to body as well as the mind.

Gandhi's scheme of education is named 'basic education,' which aims at bringing a silent social revolution. Basic education is the most simple in nature and it forms the base from which human development starts. For this basic education, he coins a new phrase 'Nai Talim' in which craft and industries are the medium of imparting education. Art, craft, health and education are a blending together in it. The function of Nai Talim is not to teach an occupation, but through it to develop the whole man. Thus, Gandhi's plan is to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding etc., which can provide a healthy and moral basis of relationship between the city and the village, ultimately leading to the abolition of the division of society into 'haves' and 'have-nots.'

We notice that there is a movement of compulsory education in our country and that education up to the basic level has been made binding. By this basic education is meant the knowledge of reading writing and arithmetic only. But for a peasant, who earns his bread in a moral way with his ordinary knowledge of the world, behaves fairly well with his family members and neighbours and observes the rules of morality in life, this literacy programme hardly matters. Kabir, for example, was a wise man who never touched pen and paper. Literacy programme hardly adds to the morality of people like him. What to talk of higher education? The knowledge of geography, Astronomy, Algebra, Geometry etc., have been never able to control the senses and never make man free from their evil effects. Instead it merely satisfies the individual ego. Hence this is false education. It is rather our ancient Gurukula system that can be called the best form of education, since it aimed not only at character building but also in making one proficient in what he can do best.

### **Stages of Basic Education:**

In the Gandhian scheme of 'Nai Talim' the pre-basic education starts from the age of two and half to seven. At this stage education concentrates on health and hygiene, games and minimum physical labour, knowledge of language and arithmetic.

Next stage of education is basic level, which ranges from the age of seven and continues till fifteen. At this level of education the students choose a basic craft and train themselves in the skill, which

is helpful for that chosen craft so that they may earn their living. Basic education, thus, links the children whether of the cities or of the villages to all that is the best and lasting.

Post-basic education helps awakening a keen desire and enthusiasm among the youth for the establishment of an ideal community. Integration and harmonious development of head, heart and hand is possible at this level. Students above eighteen are fit for higher education. They receive knowledge through action and development of personality. This is called self – study.

In order to have a self-sufficient village economy Gandhi suggests the creation of a different political system. In order to make people aware of the socio-political condition of the country and also in order to make village panchayats more effectively active, Gandhi suggests education of the villagers. He, therefore, in his scheme of Nai Talim, introduces adult education. The aim of this adult education is to impart political education to the adults. This will help them in maintaining self-governance, which will ultimately help them in achieving self-sufficient village economy. Gandhi also points out that scientific knowledge and research are useful for agriculture and other allied activities like spinning and weaving, and can also help in finding out supplementary occupations and small scale industries. In any case education is always linked with craft or vocation.

Gandhi had firm confidence on the women because woman is the incarnation of ahimsa and ahimsa includes infinite capacity of enduring self-suffering. Therefore, India's salvation depends on the sacrifice and enlightenment of her women. But it is due to the social conditions and women's own subservient mentality that they are found suppressed. Gandhi, therefore, supports women's education, which can help them in asserting the recognition of their birthright to be free and equal.

Indians cannot do without God. Theism is the mark of Indian culture. Hence religious education in India is necessary. But our religious teachers of different religions have become very much selfish, may be because of the influence and energy they have derived from English education. But Gandhi says that "only the fringe of the ocean has been polluted, and it is those who are within the fringe alone need cleansing." Then only they should devote themselves to religious education. Religious education must be the sole concern of religious associations. What Gandhi wishes to say is that religious teachers should be free from fundamentalism and fanaticism.

### **Dignity of Labour**

"Literary education should follow the education of hand, the one

gift that visibly distinguishes man from beast." The basic education, as propounded by Gandhi, therefore, overweighs dignity of labour. For him, manual work should be at the centre of education. Every workshop itself needs to be treated as a school, not that the schools are to be attached to the workshops. Earning and learning need to be reciprocal. A student can acquire knowledge quickly through activity than through formal education. We have the example of Newton discovering the theory of gravitation while watching an apple falling and James Watt discovering steam power while preparing tea.

### **Self-Supporting Education**

Education through work can make people self – reliant and education becomes self – supporting. Mere transmission of information by the teachers to the students is not proper education, but inculcation of attitude to learn from one's own experience in every field of life should be the basic aim of education. This education will provide ample opportunity for self-employment and will check the rush of the youth to towns and cities, and it will also help in reviving occupational ( caste) skills.

### **Curriculum**

There has been an increasing emphasis on the moral and spiritual aspect of education. Mere formal education without the task of character building will defeat the purpose of education. Therefore, in the ancient Gurukula Ashramas the Gurus or the teachers were just guiding the natural and impulsive growth of the disciples and were stimulating in them the interest and aptitudes to realize their potentialities. Even if there was no prescribed syllabus for them, the whole education was integrated and aimed at character building. If the children can build good character with moral and spiritual foundation, then only they can learn all other things by themselves. Hence education should train the human souls and lead them for the pursuit of truth and practice of virtue. Thus, in the Gandhian scheme, education aims at making a complete man. Since village and agriculture are at the centre of authority and economy respectively, any type of curriculum devised for any stage of education, should find answer to the requirement of the rural people. Curriculum should include community work, corporate living and social service. Students' participation in the socially useful productive work with dignity of labour should be a compulsory part of the study. But at the primary level, education should centre on health and cleanliness, language, games, physical labour and knowledge of arithmetic. Knowledge of art and craft, knowledge of the philosophy of religion and ethics



need to be taught at the secondary level.

From the primary level children need be educated in some vocation. At the level of higher education in the colleges and universities there should be the continuation and extension of the basic education course. Curriculum in higher education needs to be directed towards vocational pursuits so that it will help students to be economically independent in addition to building up of character.

### **Method of Teaching**

In Gandhi's scheme of education there is no place for compulsion because what is learnt unwillingly becomes dead knowledge, which is less than ignorance. Hence education through sacrificial love can accomplish what cannot be achieved by scolding or by the threat of punishment. Punishment does not purify, rather hardens the children. While imparting education mental aptitude of the children needs to be carefully studied. Basic schools have to place before the students a living picture of an ideal community life and inspire them with a keen desire to work for it and make it a reality. Therefore, basic education itself is said to be a method of transforming the present social structure and to lay the foundation of a world social order based on the acceptance of human values.

What is still more important is that starting from the primary school to the higher level, the medium of instruction need to be the mother tongue because the ideology of a society or of a nation can be best imparted naturally and freely to the innocent hearts of the students and even to the ordinary people through mother tongue only. It is not possible to think of 'Home Rule' through English language and English system of education. Therefore, to give millions knowledge of English is not only to enslave the people of India but also to enslave the nation as a whole.

The foundation of education that Macaulay laid has enslaved the Indians. The British system of education introduced in India created a wide gap between education and rural life. Gandhi, therefore, suggested an organic link between education and village life.

It is only when the mentality of making adequate return to the villages are developed and the urban children can play their part in the noble work of social reconstruction that the purpose of education will be served. This is why Gandhi suggests that the students studying in the urban areas must reconstruct their lives and pass every day of their vacation in the villages surrounding their high schools and colleges. And those who have finished their education should think

of settling down in the villages. To combine education with work, or education through work is the best means of bringing about a classless society. The 'Sarvasiksha Abhiyan' of the Government of India encourages teaching through toys, not through tools, only by entertainment and not by engagement.

### Conclusion

Gandhi's humanist ideology makes him conceive of an ideal society named 'Sarvodaya' which always aims at achieving a large measure of self-sufficiency. This, he thinks, can be possible only if the basis of national life is built around small communities. Such societies have their own local politics and economics. But the foundation of such society lies in the system of education, which teaches the art of discerning and estimating the relative values and how to realize them. So in order to rear the children for peace and human happiness, the entire plan and system of education should spring out of non-violence and love, which can touch their loving emotions and noble sentiments. In the present context what is needed to make democracy function is not the knowledge of facts, but right education, and money invested in right education gives a multifold return to the people, as a seed sown in good soil returns a bumper crop.

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## Gandhi and Harijans

THE WORD 'HARIJAN' was first used by the great Saint Narasimha Mehta, a Brahmin who defied the whole community and claimed the 'untouchables' as his own. Gandhi wrote "untouchable' to me, is, compared to us, really a Harijan, a man of God, and we are *Durjan* (Men of evil). For while the untouchable has toiled and moiled and dirtied his hands so that we may live in comfort and cleanliness, we have delighted in suppressing him. We are solely responsible for all the shortcomings and faults that we lay at the door of these

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'untouchables'. It is still open to us to be Harijan ourselves, but we can only do so by heartily repenting our sin against them."

According to Gandhi, Hinduism will reach its perfection only when the 'untouchables' become not only touchable but thoroughly merged into the main Hindu stream. The problem could not be left to the Harijans. They were too ignorant and suppressed to raise their head or voice. In tackling the problem of untouchability Gandhi did not call upon the untouchables to join in the struggle for the assertion of their human rights. They were incapable of doing so. They took their lowly position as having been ordained by God. Kripalani pointed out that if the high-caste social workers asked the untouchables for water, they were refused as it would be 'adharma' for them to offer water to high-caste people. Gandhi was right in calling upon the caste Hindus to make all the sacrifices necessary to render the belated justice for the grievous injury inflicted by their ancestors on the untouchables through the centuries. Gandhi wrote: "To remove untouchability is a penance that caste Hindus owe to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification required is not of 'untouchables' but of the so-called superior castes. There is no vice that is special to the 'untouchables', not even dirt and insanitation. It is our arrogance which blinds us, superior Hindus to our own blemishes and which magnifies those of our downtrodden brethren whom we have suppressed and whom we keep under suppression." Gandhi was a man who had read, traveled and seen much: he was in no way superstitious. But he was so much preoccupied with the problems of the Harijans that he attributed visitations like droughts, floods, earthquakes and the like to the sins of untouchability.

In order to tackle the problem of untouchability properly, he went to the root of it. The root lies in the holy books – the *Vedas*, *Shashtra's* and *Smriti's*. He could not rewrite them, could not improve upon them, but he could interpret the holy books in his way and that is what he did. Gandhi called himself a Sanatanist. He believed in the Varnashramadharma also but not as practised through the ages.

Gandhi had made it his life's mission to work for Harijan uplift. In this way he will be restoring the true faith to its pristine glory and doing something for the suffering humanity. He could never believe that 'untouchability' was a part of Hinduism. He wrote in 1921: "I have never been able to reconcile myself to untouchability. I have always regarded it as an excrescence in Hinduism. It is true that it has been handed down to us from generations, but so are many evil practices even to this day." He admitted that evil practices like untouchability, dedication of girls to virtual prostitution and sacrificing goats to Kali had become religious practices. These practices were

irreligious and must go.

He told the caste Hindus that it was not enough for them to hold the belief passively that untouchability was a crime. He held the priests responsible for the misery and sufferings of the untouchables. Gandhi declared that "untouchability will not be removed by the force of law". Untouchability could be removed only if the people responsible for perpetrating it wanted to do away with it. "It can only be removed when the majority of Hindus realize that it is a crime against God and man and are ashamed of it. In other words, it is a process of conversion, i.e. purification of the Hindu heart. The aid of law has to be involved when it hinders or interferes with the progress of the reform as when, inspite of the willingness of the trustees and the temple-going public, the law prohibits the opening of a particular temple." To him, the programme for the removal of untouchability had no political overtones. Political expediency is purely selfish while Gandhi's programme was to bring about a change of heart. "It is a movement purely and simply of purification of Hinduism. And that purification can only come through the purest instruments."

By the year 1946, there was a great change in his thinking; he started advocating that interdining and intermarriage were very helpful in removing untouchability and fostering communal harmony. Replying to a question through the columns of his magazine *Harijan* (28.7.46) he wrote: "At one time I did say that interdining was not an essential part of the campaign for the removal of untouchability. Personally, I was for it. Today I encourage it. In fact, today I even go further". Personally, he was already in favour of interdining. Interdining removes inhibitions and brings persons closer. He went even further and recommended inter-caste marriage. It was another difficult problem but quite vital for the removal of untouchability. If it happened that an educated Harijan girl married a Caste Hindu, she would be cut off from her caste and thus it will be a loss to the family as well as to the whole community.

The possibility of caste Hindu girl, educated or uneducated marrying a Harijan was also discussed. If an educated Harijan girl married a Caste Hindu, Gandhi noted, the couple should devote themselves to the service of Harijans. "Even if one Harijan girl marries a caste Hindu with a high character it will do good to both the Harijans and Caste Hindus. They will set up a good precedent and if the Harijan girl is really worthy, she will spread her fragrance far and wide and encourage others to copy her example. Society will cease to be scared by such marriages. They will see for themselves that there is nothing wrong in them. If children born of such a union turn out to be good, they will further help to remove untouchability."

Temple entry was another item of Gandhi's programme for the removal of untouchability. It was a strange irony that the untouchables worshipped the Gods and Goddesses of caste Hindus but were not allowed to enter the temples where these Gods and Goddesses were enshrined. They were turned away beaten and some times prosecuted against if they tried to have a 'darshan' of the deity.

But he was not in favour of 'purification'. To him, it was an insult both to the deity and the devotee. It was the duty of the caste Hindus to see that the gates of the temples are thrown open to the 'untouchables'. They, the caste Hindus, had to atone for the sin of untouchability. He said:

What is required is not so much the entry of Harijans to the temples as the conversion of the orthodox to the belief that is wrong to prevent Harijans from entering the temples. This conversion can only be brought about by an appeal to their heart, i.e., by evoking the best that is in them. Such an appeal can be made by the appellants' prayer, fasting and other suffering in their own persons, in other words, by their ever-increasing purity.

Gandhi saw that almost all the Harijans were illiterate. They were deprived of all the fruits of education and learning. Harijan children were considered dirty. They had no school of their own. Schools and Colleges were run by caste Hindus and no teacher would admit a Harijan child, as it displaced caste people. Ambedkar, when a school child, had to stand outside the class room with his satchel, and then he was allowed to sit on his own mat in a corner, well segregated from his caste Hindu class mates. Admitting an 'untouchable' to a school amounted to an insult of the caste Hindus. What could Gandhi suggest under these conditions? He could appeal to the conscience of the caste Hindus. He could suggest the opening of separate schools for the untouchable children. He could require the teachers and caste-children to be kind and tolerant, and that is what he did. There was no place for any force or violence in this programme.

Gandhi never wanted that there should be any segregation or separation of the Harijans at any level in life. Segregating of them will mean their subjugation forever. They will be branded as long as they are segregated. During the thirties there was much talk of separate electorates for the Harijans. Gandhi bitterly opposed the idea: "I am certain that the question of separate electorates for the 'untouchables' is a modern manufacture of a Satanic Government. The only thing needed is to put them on the voters' list, and provide for fundamental rights for them in the Constitution." He further noted that separate electorates to the untouchables will ensure them

bondage in perpetuity. He emphatically asked, "Do you want the 'untouchables' to remain untouchables forever?"

He never wanted the 'untouchables' to be classified as a separate class. There were right-minded Hindus who sincerely worked for the removal of the blot of untouchability. Sikhs, Muslims and Christians might remain as they are but should 'untouchables' remain untouchables forever? This was a vital issue before Gandhi and he wrote:

I do not mind the 'untouchables' being converted to Islam or Christianity. I should tolerate that, but I cannot possibly tolerate what is in store for Hinduism if there are two divisions set forth in the villages. Those who speak of political rights of 'untouchables' do not know India and do not know how Indian society is today constructed. Therefore, I want to say with all the emphasis that I can command that if I was the only person to resist this thing I will resist it with my life.

The Gandhian approach to the problem was simple and optimistic. He wanted truthful and non-violent means to be followed in this case as in the pursuit of other ends of life. He did not expect the Harijans to take up the task of reforming themselves in their own hands. They were too simple, too ignorant, too illiterate and too suppressed, to undertake this task. He left the task to the upper-caste people. Why? He explicitly pointed out that the caste-people had done much injustice to their own brethren. They had rather committed a sin by treating these 'Children of God' as untouchables. They should do penance for the sin. Gandhi wanted a change of heart here. The caste-people should realize their duty and atone for their sins.

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## Microfinance: Problems and Prospects

IN ORDER TO root out exploitation, a non-violent society or state has to be established. Such a society can be possible only through decentralisation. Violence logically leads to centralisation; the essence of non-violence is decentralisation. Gandhi has always been advocating such decentralisation of economic and political power in the form of more or less self-sufficient and self-governing village communities. He regards such communities as the models of non-violent organisation. Gandhi, of course, does not mean that the ancient Indian village republics should be revived exactly in the old form; that is neither possible nor desirable. Necessary changes will have to be introduced in view of the changed circumstances and needs. Moreover, the old rural communities were not free from all shortcomings.

As the foundation of the Gandhian social order is religious or spiritual, economic and political questions are seen from the moral or humanistic perspective. The welfare of human beings, not of systems or institutions, is the ultimate consideration. In concrete terms, it centres on the following concepts and ideals:

The Gandhian political order takes the form of a direct, participatory democracy, operating in a tier structure from the base village-level tier upward through the district and state levels to the national (and international) level.

Economic decentralization to prevent massive concentrations of economic power in the hands of a few.

Minimisation of competition and exploitation in the economic sphere, and the encouragement of cooperation.

Production on the basis of need rather than greed, concentrating first on the eradication of poverty.

Recognition of the dignity of labour and the greater purity of rural life.

The practice of extensive self-reliance by individuals, villages, regions and the nation.

Absence of oppression on the basis of race, caste, class, language, gender or religion.

A deep respect for Mother Nature, necessitating an economic system based on the preservation rather than destruction of the natural environment.

Decentralization is one of the ways of achieving participation of the people. The Gandhian way of thinking has always been looked upon decentralization as a way of achieving participation of the people at the grassroots. With such an approach, it is assumed that empowerment of the marginalized section of the population will be achieved. Gandhian philosophy was based on the concept of empowering the marginalized. However, this empowerment was thought in terms of a bottom-up approach rather than top-down model. Apart from other approaches, in recent years, microfinance as a model is considered within the decentralization discourse as an approach to bring about empowerment of the marginalized, especially women.

It can be said that the governmental policies are centered on the micro-finance institutions in order of bring about empowerment of women. In other words, they are equated with strategies of poverty alleviation. But the feasibility of these policies is yet to be analysed. It is yet to be seen whether these micro-finance institutions really help in making any marked changes in the community.

During 1950s and 1960s, training programmes for various cooperative activities were organized for women in different countries. Then in the mid-1970 to early 1980s there was a sudden surge of interest in ways of increasing women's access to income. Microfinance programmes are currently being promoted as a key strategy for simultaneously addressing both poverty alleviation and women's empowerment

In this context, Linda Mayoux has differentiated between the market and the empowerment approach. The market approach is more like a top-down approach, which is mainly seen as a channel to promote economic growth through fostering women's entrepreneurship skills. This approach is more focused and profit-oriented as it caters to only some sections of women's population. On the other hand, the empowerment approach is some sort of a bottom-up approach, which is more holistic in nature. It aims at promoting overall development of women by bringing about changes in their lives. A market approach is that which aims to assist individual women entrepreneurs to increase their incomes, and an empowerment approach is that which aims not only to increase the incomes, but also the bargaining power of poor producers through group activities.

The self-help approach could unleash the economic power of women by creating a self-help movement that provides emotional support and encouragement, role models, skill training and job opportunities. But the success of the self-help group depends on the motivation of the women members. The involvement of the members



should be done through techniques like PRA. And it should be more of a bottom-up approach i.e., involving the women in the functioning of the self-help group than based on decisions being taken at higher levels.

Though self-help groups are considered to be enhancing the status of women, several problems with them have been underlined by Linda Mayoux. Firstly, these self-help groups are alleged to be catering to the needs of the better-off women. In this process, the poor women are often left behind. Secondly, the burden of the workload in these organizations may overshadow the benefits incurred from them. The engrossment of women both at home and in those organizations may leave them with no time to rest. The income generated from the SHG activities may be utilized in fulfilling the unmet needs of the family. This may all lead to more subordination of women and the appropriation of their earnings by the male members of the family. Thirdly, women involve in self-help groups because of their already poor wage levels unlike men. Lastly, the sustainability of these groups has also been doubtful. The loans given to women may be used by men to cater to some other needs. Later on another loan may be taken in order to repay the previous loan leading to a debt trap.

Generally, microfinance is understood in terms of its economic influence. However, economic aspect is only one of the dimensions of development. In addition to this, there are also factors like social, familial and individual levels, which can be said to be the other dimensions of empowerment. So, it is important not only to understand the empowerment of women from the point of view of economic uplift but also in terms of their autonomy.

Preliminary analysis reveals that microfinance has brought about changes in the lives of the womenfolk. But whether this change can be termed as empowerment needs further analysis. Though microfinance has made the women independent financially, their decision-making power in terms of spending the income is still doubtful.

Women of poor households typically spend almost all their incomes to purchase goods for the family's general consumption and for their children; men usually spend a significant part on their personal needs (tobacco, liquor, etc.). Of course, the relationship between the mother's wage earnings and the child's health status is complex: for instance, the positive consumption effect of maternal earnings could be offset by reduced maternal time in childcare. On the other way round, taking up both the tasks ambitiously may hamper the health of a woman. Therefore, it is important to consider, whether there occurs an improvement of her own life conditions apart

from that of her family. Focus should also be laid on whether she adequately gets her share of the food, mobility, health protection and say in family decision-making.

Strategies should be adopted to look into wider structural changes in gender relationships. In this respect "gender mainstreaming" is required to end marginalization of womenfolk. Mainstreaming of gender concerns in planning, policy and implementation to provide effective rights and dignity to the disadvantaged, inclusive social, political and economic institutions, transformation of cultural structures of power within the home and outside, ending domestic and public violence, and recognition of women's work (productive and reproductive) and contribution to economy as well as their economic agency can go a long way in address this marginalization. This can only be achieved when people become sensitive towards gender issues and there is active involvement of both men and women to participate in the development process.

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## The Personal Roots of Mahatma Gandhi's Philosophy

IT IS OFTEN thought that philosophy occupies an abstract realm, divorced from the contaminations of mundane existence. This was the regnant concept of philosophy for a long time but people now wonder if such a divorce between a person's experiences and philosophy is possible. Could Plato's views on democracy remain uninfluenced by the fact that it was a democracy which made his master Socrates drink the hemlock? Could Thomas Jefferson's thought remain unaffected by the fact that he owned slaves?

The purpose of this note is not to answer such questions but to propose that Mahatma Gandhi's personal experience of racism was not all black but rather grey and this may explain why, when he

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confronted racism, it was in the spirit of a reformer rather than as an enemy of the white people. The reader will note that, in the following passage, Gandhi's reactions are remarkably restrained in the light of the racial indignity to which he had just been subjected. He writes:

I began to think of my duty. Should I fight for my rights or go back to India, or should I go on to Pretoria without minding the insults, and return to India after finishing the case? It would be cowardice to run back to India without fulfilling my obligation. The hardship to which I was subjected was superficial—only a symptom of the deep disease of colour prejudice. I should try, if possible, to root out the disease and suffer hardships in the process. Redress for wrongs I should seek only to the extent that would be necessary for the removal of the colour prejudice.

So I decided to take the next available train to Pretoria.

It is our suggestion that Mahatma Gandhi's thought displays this restraint and balance because his experience of racism was mixed—it was not black and white but grey. Mahatma Gandhi, during that fateful journey from Durban to Pretoria, experienced both *racism* and *humanism*. For instance, when he was being boxed around on the coach at Pardekopf, as he traveled from Charlestown to Johannesburg, it were the white passengers who came to his rescue. Mahatma Gandhi writes:

As I was struggling through these sentences, the man came down upon me and began heavily to box my ears. He seized me by the arm and tried to drag me down. I clung to the brass rails of the coachbox and was determined to keep my hold even at the risk of breaking my wrist bones. The passengers were witnessing the scene—the man swearing at me, dragging and belabouring me, and I remaining still. He was strong and I was weak. Some of the passengers were moved to pity and exclaimed: "Man, let him alone. Don't beat him. He is not to blame. He is right. If he can't stay there, let him come and sit with us." "No fear," cried the man, but he seemed somewhat crestfallen and stopped beating me. He let go my arm, swore at me a little more, and asking the Hottentot servant who was sitting on the other side of the coachbox to sit on the footboard, took the seat so vacated.

Similarly, on his way to Pretoria from Johannesburg, Mahatma Gandhi was put at ease by a white fellow passenger:

I took my seat in a first class compartment and the train started. At Germiston the guard came to examine the tickets. He was angry to find me there, and signaled to me with his finger to go to the third class. I showed him my first class ticket. "That doesn't matter," said he, "remove

to the third class."

There was only one English passenger in the compartment. He took the guard to task. "What do you mean by troubling the gentleman?" he said. "Don't you see he has a first class ticket? I do not mind in the least his traveling with me." Addressing me, he said, "You should make yourself comfortable where you are."

The guard muttered: "If you want to travel with a coolie, what do I care?" and went away.

These are occasions of his being treated kindly by whites *after* his harrowing experience of eviction from the train. In Pretoria also he had a similar experience:

The station became clear of all passengers. I gave my ticket to the ticket collector and began my inquiries. He replied to me courteously, but I saw that he could not be of any considerable help. But an American Negro who was standing nearby broke into the conversation.

"I see," said he, "that you are an utter stranger here, without any friends. If you will come with me, I will take you to a small hotel, of which the proprietor is an American who is very well known to me. I think he will accept you."

I had my own doubts about the offer, but I thanked him and accepted his suggestion. He took me to Johnston's Family Hotel. He drew Mr. Johnston aside to speak to him, and the latter agreed to accommodate me for the night, on condition that I should have my dinner served in my room.

"I assure you," said he, "that I have no colour prejudice. But I have only European customers, and, if I allowed you to eat in the dining-room, my guests might be offended and even go away."

"Thank you," said I, "even for accommodating me for the night. I am now more or less acquainted with the conditions here, and I understand your difficulty. I do not mind your serving the dinner in my room. I hope to be able to make some other arrangement tomorrow."

I was shown into a room, where I now sat waiting for the dinner and musing, as I was quite alone. There were not many guests in the hotel, and I had expected the waiter to come very shortly with the dinner. Instead Mr. Johnston appeared. He said: "I was ashamed of having asked you to have your dinner here. So I spoke to the other guests about you, and asked them if they would mind your having your dinner in the dining-room. They said they had no objection, and that they did not mind your staying here as long as you liked. Please, therefore, come to the dining-room, if you will, and stay here as long as you wish."

I thanked him again, went to the dining-room and had a hearty dinner.

These incidents, although they occur after the eviction, may have had the effect of confirming him in his resolve that he must seek only justice and not revenge. This must have been confirmed in his mind,

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when he found that it was the wife of the police superintendent who, with her parasol, held the crowd at bay, after he was almost attacked by them on returning from a trip to India where they felt he had maligned whites. Subsequently he also made good his escape through the good offices of the British Police Superintendent. Hence *all* whites could not be considered bigoted, and it would be a departure from the truth to hold all of them guilty of the same prejudice.

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#### Examples

*Books:* Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 23.

*Articles:* Ramashray Roy, "Parameters of Participation", *Gandhi Marg*, 12, 3 (October-December 1990), p. 276.

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*Internet Citations:* Apart from author and article, include also the URL and date of download. For example: <www.un.org> accessed on 10 May 2006.

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